

CONFIRMATION
STRENGTHENING THE FAITH FORMATION OF
ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PARENTS:
CONTEXTUALIZING LUTHER'S CATECHISM FOR A
LOCAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is to provide an understanding of how adolescents grow in their faith development, and how a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may assist in that growth of the adolescents as well as their parents. The scope is centered on a Lutheran view of Confirmation, in which the seventh and eighth graders experience an intensive study in Bible, Martin Luther's Small Catechism, and faith.

Chapters include: an exploration on the situation of today's adolescents, such as needs, possibilities, and stressors; a Biblical study of words and concepts relating to teaching, learning, and the rituals of baptism and confirmation; an historical study on the development of confirmation out of and in conjunction with baptism; an examination of past and current theories of adolescent development and faith development; surveys taken and results received from Junior High and Senior High youth, focus groups of parents, youth, and other Lutheran pastors. The results gathered set a framework for confirmation ministry in a Lutheran congregation, providing guidance for a confirmation ministry program and support for the parents of the adolescents.

CHAPTER 1

The Problems Facing Today's Adolescents' Faith Growth

“Will our children have faith?” That question first posed by John Westerhoff¹ as the title to his pivotal 1976 book has become the forming question for this Thesis. Will our children, specifically adolescents in the Lutheran tradition, grow in faith, in discipleship, and in relationship to the Triune God? And as a corollary, will the parents of these adolescents grow in their own faith, so that they may be guides and models for their children?

Will our children have faith? Educating youth, converts, and disciples in the faith has had a long tradition in the Judeo-Christian context. Yet by the time of the Reformation, Dr. Martin Luther bewailed the status of education among his people, as is shown in his Preface to the Small Catechism, written in 1528:

The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version. Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yes supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments. As a result they live like simple cattle or irrational pig and, despite the fact that the gospel has been

1. John H. Westerhoff, III, *Will our Children have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom.²

Dr. Luther was never one to hide his opinions. Whereas this author is unwilling to refer to members of his parish as irrational pigs, he is nevertheless concerned about the status of education in the church today. Dr. Luther wrote his Small Catechism so that parents could teach the faith to their children. Today, parents, for the most part, may find it difficult to teach the faith, partly because some of them are unable to express their own faith, partly also due to the issues of raising adolescents in today's world, with all the competing activities and stresses. So, the task of education has been given to the Church and its leadership, setting in motion the task of Confirmation ministry used by the Lutheran Church from Luther's day into the present. Also in the "Preface" he wrote:

Therefore, my dear sirs and brothers who are either pastors or preachers, I beg all of you for God's sake to take up your office boldly, to have pity on your people who are entrusted to you, and to help us bring the catechism to the people, especially to the young. Moreover, I ask that those unable to do any better take up these charts and versions (the Small Catechism) and read them to the people word for word..."³

The Situation of Today's Adolescents

The adolescent also is bombarded on all sides with activities, expectations, pressures, as well as physical/mental changes in their own selves. There is in the adolescent both great possibilities – faithfulness, love, forgiveness, care, spontaneity, joy. There are also all the frustrations that adults encounter as the adolescent works his/her

2. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 247-248.

3. Kolb, *The Book of Concord*, 348.

way through the changes of their life. And through it all, the Holy Spirit moves.

A primary conviction of this author is that God alone is God. We do what we can do, but God continues to work God's amazing ways in our midst. As St. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."⁴

It is in the grace of God, therefore, that we proceed, exploring both some of the issues of these days as well as the needs of our adolescents and their parents. It is also with the prayer that our amazing God would bless our parents and youth with the abundance of the Holy Spirit, as we all grow in maturity in Christ.

This is a time of rapid change, and today's youth are at the forefront of many of those changes. As one author puts it:

Today's children are experiencing many firsts. They are the first day-care generation; the first truly multicultural generation; the first generation to grow up in the electronic bubble, the environment defined by computers and new forms of television; the first post-sexual-revolution generation; the first generation to grow up in a new form of dispersed cities that mix elements of urban, suburban, and rural cultures."⁵

David Elkind, a well respected author and expert on adolescent issues, provides one more glimpse into changes prevalent in our times:

Other social changes have also transformed the context in which young people are growing up. Starting in the sixties a new youth culture emerged, spearheaded by a new musical form: rock and roll. Until the advent of that musical style young people had modeled their musical choices, their language, their clothing, and the behaviors (smoking, drinking) after that of adults. With the creation of a new

4. All scriptural quotations come from the New Revised Standard Version of the *Holy Bible*.

5. William R. Yount, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 2nd ed., (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), 330.

youth culture and the elevation of that cultures' heroes, adults were no longer the models emulated by adolescents. . . . From this standpoint, the emergence of a unique youth culture expressed young people's need to have a place of their own, even if it is primarily an electronic one.⁶

George Barna's survey, "How Teenagers' Faith Practices Are Changing," moves us beyond the changes in our times to statistical changes occurring in the life of the youth:

In several ways, teenagers are much less inclined toward spirituality than were teens a dozen years ago. The study assessed nine different forms of teenage involvement; six of those religious activities are at their lowest levels since Barna Group began tracking such teen behaviors. These included small group attendance, prayer, Sunday school participation, donations to churches, reading sacred texts other than the Bible, and evangelism by Christian teens (explaining their belief in Jesus Christ with others who have different faith views).

(David) Kinnaman, (president of the Barna Group and the director of the research) commented on the findings: "While there is still much vibrancy to teen spirituality, it seems to be 'thinning out.' Teenagers view religious involvement partly as a way to maintain their all-important relationships. Yet perhaps technology such as social networking is reconfiguring teens' needs for relationships and continual connectivity, diminishing the role of certain spiritual forms of engagement in their lives. Talking to God may be losing out to Facebook."⁷

Dr. Merton Strommen has conducted an abundance of surveys of youth and parents, leading to two pivotal books, *The Five Cries of Youth*, and *The Five Cries of Parents*. His First cry from the youth, resulting from these surveys, is the cry of self hatred. From the survey results he records:

A significant portion of church youth are dogged by thoughts of failure and self-criticism. They are self-critical with respect to what they have done or what they have failed to do. They compare themselves with people who excel in an area appealing to them; perfection in an impossible number of areas becomes their

6. David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1998), 14-15.

7. David Kinnaman, "How Teenagers' Faith Practices Are Changing," Barna Group, www.barna.org, Teens/Next Gen Articles, (accessed February 12, 2011).

goal. Aiming for unrealistic goals only serves to exaggerate their own shortcomings.

...In these youth, feelings of guilt and remorse are abundantly evident along with awareness of their inability to forgive themselves. Yet, the youth most troubled by self-criticism are as likely as others in the sample to affirm they are forgiven by God. Though intellectually they acknowledge God's forgiveness, emotionally they do not live in an awareness of God's acceptance but remain preoccupied with standards and the task of "making it" in the eyes of others.

Analysis shows that one out of four is much troubled by thoughts of personal blame.⁸

Dr. Strommen offers three specific issues the adolescent faces in this self-hatred cry, those being a sense of personal fault, a lack of self-confidence, and a perception of low self-regard. Listed here are Dr. Strommen's comments about this third characteristic, followed by a Table recording the percentage of adolescents who register their level of loneliness:

A third characteristic is perceiving oneself as a person of low worth, a person without importance.

About one-half of our respondents admit to this perception. ... They tend to feel lonely, uncomfortable about the future, and bored with life; they speak about competence, talent, and ability as qualities with others, not they, possess.⁹

Table 1.1. Influence of Loneliness

	Percentage answering Yes		
	Lonely	Sometimes Lonely	Not Lonely
I find life exciting and full of fun	30	49	68
I feel that my future is in good hands	32	48	68
I feel no one knows me	64	37	27 ¹⁰

Source: Strommen, *Cries of Youth*, 20.

8. Merton P. Strommen, *Five Cries of Youth* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 16.

9. Strommen, *Cries of Youth*, 19.

These statistics are certainly sobering, yet not the only issues adolescents face. In addition to the cry of self-hatred, Strommen lists four others, in which we see both the hurt and the promise of the adolescent:

Cry of Psychological Orphans...youth living in atmospheres of parental hatred and distrust...family pressures, distress over relationships with parents, disappointment in family unity, and a negative perception of one's family social concerns.¹⁰

Cry of social protest...These youth are (1) humanitarian, (2) Oriented to change, (3) socially involved, (4) concerned over national issues, and (5) critical of the institutional church, in which adults seem not to be 'caring'.¹¹

Cry of the Prejudiced...It is the cry of people whose religion is self-effort and whose goal is achieving a place in the sun, even at the price of stepping on others...our findings indicate this outlook is alive and active in the youth population...¹²

Cry of the Joyous...It is the cry of youth whose joy is in a sense of identity and mission that centers in the person of Jesus Christ. As a minority group (about one-third or all church youth) they exemplify in what they value, believe, perceive, and do the impact of identifying with a personal God and a believing community.¹³

On the following page the reader will find two tables that visualize results from a survey prepared by the George Barna group, presenting the attendance of American Teenagers and their accompanying "faith practices" over several years. Even though weekly attendance at Church is somewhat in the decline, attendance at small groups and Sunday School, prayer, donating of money, and explaining their belief in Jesus to a non-believer have all faced a deeper decline. We have a mission field right here in our youth!

10. Strommen, *Cries of Youth*, 33.

11. Strommen, *Cries of Youth*, 53.

12. Strommen, *Cries of Youth*, 73-74.

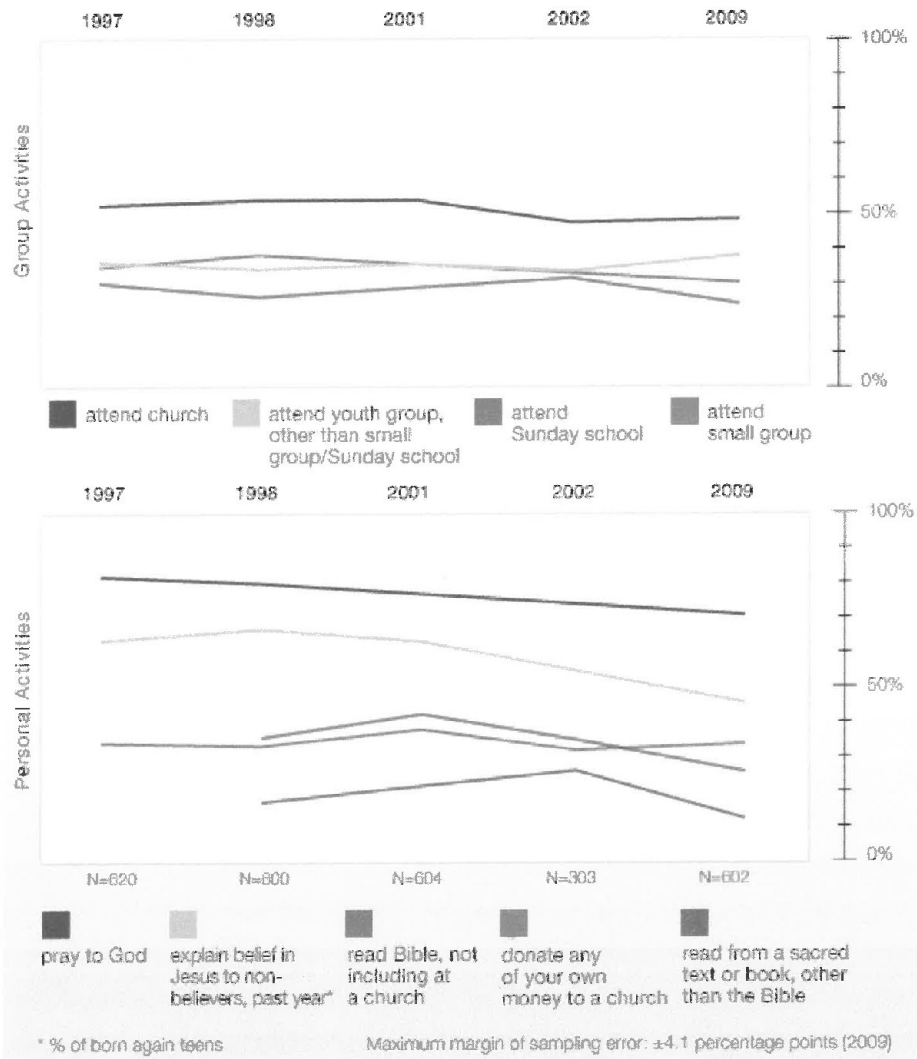
13. Strommen, *Cries of Youth*, 92.

Table 1.2 – Spiritual Activities of American Teenagers

Source: Barna Group, YouthPol®SM

THE SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES OF AMERICAN TEENAGERS

% of all U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 reported weekly participation, unless otherwise noted



Source: Kinnaman, Teenagers' Faith Practices.

The Call and Needs of Today's Adolescents

But these statistics do not reflect the totality of the adolescent condition, nor of the Church's role (nor certainly of the role of the Holy Spirit). "Happily, the evidence is that not only is adolescence a time which stimulates a desire to find a deeper groundedness in one's life, but it is also a time when the person becomes capable of actually apprehending truth in a spiritual way."¹⁴ Even in the midst of adolescent changes, the window of opportunity to assist the adolescent in faith development is open:

George Barna discovered (2006) that more than four out of five teens (81 percent), nationwide, attended a church for at least two consecutive months during their teen years. This reveals that churches have the ears of 81 percent of teenagers for a short period of time, providing a wonderful opportunity to teach/disciple them.

Current research supports the need to be effective in our reaching/teaching/discipling of youth because nearly half of all Americans who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior do so by age 13 (43 percent). Two-thirds (64 percent) will accept Jesus before their eighteenth birthday and 77 percent by their twenty-first birthday. This means that less than one out of four (23 percent) will accept Jesus Christ after age 21.¹⁵

Craig Dykstra speaks of a hunger in the adolescent, a hunger for a way to find their self in the world:

Moreover, adolescence is a time of disorientation and conflict for some young people in our culture, partly because so many diverse patterns of interpretation are available.... Thus adolescents, according to Erickson, hunger for some larger whole, for a broad full-orbed pattern of interpretation of the world and of the significance and meaning of the events, circumstances, and interactions that take place in that world.¹⁶

14. Gary L. Davis, "Spiritual Direction: A Model For Adolescent Catechesis," *Religious Education* 81, no. 2 (Spring 1986), 270.

15. Yount, *Teaching Ministry*, 328.

16.. Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 121.

In the midst of the disorientation and conflict, the Church speaks the word of life through Jesus Christ, for all people and all ages. The adolescent, not uniquely but part of humanity, therefore is called to work to bring the spiritual dimension to bear on all of the aspects of life:

...[S]piritual development is a dimension of human life and experience as significant as cognitive development, emotional development, or social development. All of these dimensions of development are interrelated. It is the spiritual dimension that is most involved in a person's effort to integrate the many aspects of development. As a core process of development including the creation of a life narrative (in which the self is connected to larger constructs of values, tradition, space, and/or time), spiritual development cannot be reduced to merely human need or desire.¹⁷

What is it that this adolescent needs, who is bombarded by pressure and changes, full of potential and possibility, and working hard to grow into adulthood? The following are four examples of those whose studies have led them to these conclusions regarding the needs of youth. First is a summary of a list from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Statement on Confirmation:

The Need for Self-Worth and Personal Identity... Our society's emphasis on competition and achievement, the dilemma between having and not having, the media images of perfection, and adult expectations contribute to young people's negative feelings about themselves.

The Need for Relationships. Personal identity is linked to a sense of belonging to a group. Young people need relationships with each other, with adults, and with God.

The Need for Time. Sometimes adults appear to have too little time for young people. Unfortunately, many young people also have too little time for themselves.¹⁸

17. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain and Pamela Elostyne King & Linda Wagener & Peter L. Benson, ed. *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 9.

18. The Confirmation Ministry Task Force Report, (Adopted by the Third Biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, September 1, 1993), as printed in Robert L. Conrad, et al., *Confirmation: Engaging Lutheran Foundations and Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 273.

In his book on teaching, author William Yount calls the church to be aware of these needs that he feels are important:

Teenagers have both general and specific needs of various kinds. Specific needs refer to personal concerns: family problems, conflicts with friends, difficulties at school, self-image frustrations, and the like. These needs are best engaged in private. General needs refer to those common to all teenagers, and are also very helpful to know. Here are a few of them:

1. To believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose.
2. To have a sense of community and deeper relationships.
3. To be appreciated and loved
4. To be listened to-to be heard.
5. To have practical help in developing a mature faith
6. To be challenged in what they believe and why.
7. To have spontaneity in life.
8. To experience consistency in adult-youth relationships.¹⁹

Another resource dealing with adolescent spiritual development identifies six markers of positive youth development:

Through civic engagement they enter a life path marked by the “five Cs” of positive youth development: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (or compassion). Such youth will pursue the noble purpose of becoming productive adult members of their community (Damon, Menon & Bronk, 2003), developing the “sixth C” of contribution to self, family, others, and ultimately, civil society.²⁰

And from Merton & Irene Strommen’s studies, *Five Cries of Parents*, this list is offered to help parents understand their child:

Following are the seven goals an adolescent intuitively seeks to achieve during the teen years.

1. Achievement. The satisfaction of arriving at excellence in some area of endeavor.
2. Friends. The broadening of one’s social base by having learned to make friends and maintain them.

19. Yount, *Teaching Ministry*, 338.

20. Roehlkepartain, *Handbook*, 63, quoted in W. Damon, J. Menon, & K. C. Bronk, “The development of purpose during adolescence,” *Applied Developmental Science* no. 7 (2003), 119-128.

3. Feelings. The self understanding gained through having learned to share one's feelings with another person.
4. Identity. The sense of knowing 'who I am,' of being recognized as a significant person.
5. Responsibility. The confidence of knowing 'I can stand alone and make responsible decisions.'
6. Maturity. Transformation from a child into an adult.
7. Sexuality. Acceptance of responsibility for one's new role as a sexual being.

The initial letters of each catchword in this list form the acronym "AFFIRMS." Because a conceptual framework may be easily forgotten, using the word "Affirms" as a memory jog can help recall the *seven goals of adolescence*.²¹

Will our children have faith? It is the Church's task, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to nurture, guide, and witness to God's children, who even in the midst of struggle and trial, bring hope and joy, needs and gifts to the glory of God.

The Situation of Today's Parents of Adolescents

In 1985, Merton Strommen, founder of Search Institute, and his wife, Irene, a teacher, wrote the book based on "...the findings of the massive study of Young Adolescents and their Parents, also called the Adolescent-Parent study, which was carried out by Peter L. Benson and the research team of Search Institute in 1983."²² This study was then published as the *Five Cries of Parents*, following the insights of *Five Cries of Youth*. This book not only lays out the 5 issues and struggles that concern parents of adolescents, it also offers helpful resources, based on their research. The cries include: the need of parents: to understand themselves and their adolescent; to know what makes for a close family life; to understand and model moral behavior and purpose in their

21. Merton P. Strommen & A. Irene Strommen. *Five Cries of Parents* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 33-34.

22. Strommen, *Cries of Parents*, 1.

children; to know how faith can be made central in family life; and to know where to turn for help in crisis situations.²³

As with youth, the parents of youth face a crisis. Many feel uncomfortable sharing the deepest longings of their heart, including their faith. Dr. Strommen offers this hope:

For whatever reasons, parents find it difficult to see themselves as teachers. Parents teach their children the basics of life, the foundations of life, and the most important things in life, but when it comes to religious education, parents feel inadequate. My hope is that one day parents will feel confident enough to encourage religious learning in the home. The first step, I imagine, is for parents to recognize the innate presence of God in the young child.²⁴

In addition, many are unsure how to answer the questions from their children, or are unable to give voice to the truth that is in them:

Beliefs are not the same as faith. In her book *To Set One's Heart*, Sara Little expresses this in an interesting way. She says that beliefs are components of faith. ...One reason it is hard to discuss faith issues at home is that neither parents nor children have struggled to verbalize the words of faith—in other words, their beliefs. We need informal and structured discussions about matters of faith in order to clarify this for ourselves and each other.²⁵

Craig Dykstra also joins the call for parents to find their faith-voice, as well as to speak that voice in words that still make sense:

Why, then, do we so often fail to teach young people this language (of faith) and use it with them? I suggest two possible alternatives. The first is that we ourselves, as parents, friends, teachers, and pastors of youth, do not really know and use the language of faith in any meaningful way. The second is that for too

23. Strommen, *Cries of Parents*, 11ff.

24. Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones, *Informed by Faith: A Spiritual Handbook for Christian Educators and Parents* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 2004), 137.

25. Strommen, *Cries of Parents*, 140-141, quoted in Sara Little, *To Set One's Heart* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 13-17.

much of the language that we think of as religious language is either so abstract and lifeless or so authoritarian and moralistic in character that it either is simply useless in daily discourse or is something rightly to be avoided.²⁶

But, as with youth, there is great hope. God has appointed the ministry of parenting, and through this ministry parents help mold and guide their children, even as they continue to grow in the faith. One set of studies highlights the role parents and their spiritual parenting:

Parents who perceive the role of parenting as spiritually significant report less verbal aggression and more consistent discipline with their children than do other parents (Pargament & Mahoney, 2002). Religion also conveys messages to children that their role in the parent-child relationship has spiritual significance, such that they ought to honor their parents (Mahoney et al, 2003). Indeed research suggests that religion plays an important role in increasing adolescents' commitment to their families. More specifically, adolescents who attend church tend to be more involved with their families, hold profamily attitudes, and report satisfaction with their family life (Smith, 2003).²⁷

As with youth, parents need help in forming their faith-language, in sharing their faith, in parenting their adolescents. The purpose of this Thesis is to provide the youth with guidance in their faith journey, and to support their parents in their spiritual call of parenting, trusting all along in the providential presence of our Loving God.

26. Dykstra, *Growing in Life*, 124.

27. Roehlkepartain, *Handbook*, 359, as quoted in K. I Pargament and A. Mahoney, *Spirituality: Discovering and conserving the sacred* (2002), in C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez, eds, *Handbook of positive psychology*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 646-659, and in C. Smith, "Theorizing religious effects among American Adolescents", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(1), 2003, 17-30.

Setting

The setting of this Thesis is an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregation with about 600 in worship on the weekend, in a predominately anglo-american, middle class suburb of an Ohio city. There are 50-60 7th and 8th graders in the Confirmation program each year, the vast majority of whom attend the same school.

The Confirmation program, as in most ELCA congregations, consists of a weekly meeting throughout the Jr. High years, in which the teaching centers on Luther's Small Catechism and the Holy Bible. At the end of the 8th grade, Confirmands stand before the congregation and affirm their faith, taking upon themselves the mantle of discipleship, becoming, as it were, adults in the Church.

The impetus to this Thesis is the author's concern for these adolescents. What can the Church do to not hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in the faith growth of these youth as their lives change, as the culture changes, as the youth's needs and at-risk behaviors are evident? For many of the youth in this context confirmation classes are at best a time with friends, at worst something to be endured. This author is exploring the change needed to affirm these youth and support their growth in faith, so that they may not only articulate their faith that actually means something to them, but live their faith as disciples of Jesus.

A corollary to the needs of the Church regarding the adolescents is to explore the tools that can be given to their parents to help them in their ministry of raising their children. Too many parents in our context see this time as just a rite-of-passage for their youth. Also, many of them are unable to talk to their youth about their own faith, much less about other important issues in life.

This is the author's second congregation in his ministry, and he has served in this congregation over 25 years.

The Plan of This Thesis

Chapter 2 will be a look at the Biblical understanding of the teaching ministry. It will also encompass a historical look at the role of Baptism and Confirmation beginning in the early Church through the lens of the Lutheran Reformation, and how Confirmation is viewed today.

Chapter 3 is a review of several of the texts that deal with adolescent development and faith-development. There will also be a review of several curricula that are presently available, exploring the benefits and shortcomings of each.

Chapter 4, the Project design, will consist of the results of surveys and focus groups, conducted among Jr. High persons involved in Confirmation, among 10th and 11th grade persons who have come through the Confirmation program, among parents of Jr. High persons involved in Confirmation, and among Pastors who teach the Catechism. One goal is to discover how the adolescent is learning the faith and what methods might be best to assist in that learning. Another goal is to produce materials for parents to support them in their parenting ministry. A third goal is to decide on the best time in an adolescent's life for them to participate in the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism. A fourth goal is to explore how the instruction and rite of Confirmation supports or hinders faith formation in the adolescent.

The final chapter will offer the results that come from the Project Design.

Conclusion

John Westerhoff, quoted at the beginning of this chapter has an important word for the reader, calling the Church to something deeper than just the activities of the faith, but to the heart of the personal faith in Jesus:

Recall the question asked in the gospel according to St. Luke, 'When the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?' (Luke 18:8). Surely he will find religion (institutions, creeds, documents, artifacts, and the like), but he may not find faith. Faith is deeply personal, dynamic, ultimate. Religion, however, is faith's expression. For example, religion is concerned about institutions (churches), documents, statements of belief (Bible and theology), and our convictions and moral codes. Religion is important, but not ultimately important. Educationally, religion is a means not an end; faith is the only end. Faith, therefore, and not religion, must become the concern of Christian education.²⁸

To become mature in faith through the confirmation process, both in the adolescent and in his/her parent, is the center of this Thesis, so that youth and parent may live lives faithful to their call from our loving God and witness to God's lavish grace. To God be the glory!

A last word in this Chapter is from the ELCA Statement on Confirmation Ministry, defining the purpose of Confirmation in the Lutheran Church. "Confirmation ministry is a pastoral and educational ministry of the church that helps the baptized through Word and Sacrament to identify more deeply with the Christian community and participate more fully in its mission."²⁹

28. Westerhoff, *Will Our Children*, 21-22

29. Conrad, *Confirmation*, 266.

CHAPTER 2

Teaching and Confirmation in Scripture and Through History

Education is the central issue in this thesis: the education of our youth, of their parents, and of the Church. This concept of education comes from God, who is the One who is the Prime Teacher, and then from God's actions humans are empowered to join in the ministry of teaching. One author speaks of God's role:

Education is so integral to life that no one can exist without it. God requires that education forms part of human history and salvation, because, after all, this is how we experience God as teacher. God is community, and desires to share love and community with humanity. The story of creation states that God created humans from a place of community: "Let us make humankind in our image" (Genesis 1:26)

From the earth, God *educated* humanity. It is as though God educated us into being. This is what we glean from our creation: God has led us into being. Shortly after the creation of humans, God consulted with them about the naming of the animals and the order of the world. This is not a debate about what God ordered humans to do or to be, but it is obvious that God led them out of nonexistence into existence, led them from chaos into creativity, and educated them about their choices in life.¹

In this Chapter the biblical words and understandings of teaching and learning will be explored. The biblical precedence for some of the ritual actions we do in baptism and confirmation will also be investigated. Following the biblical material there will be a theological review of the history of baptism and confirmation, from the time of the early church, through the medieval church, the Lutheran Reformation, and then in Lutheran congregations today.

1. Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones, *Informed by Faith: A Spiritual Handbook for Christian Educators and Parents* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 2004), 7.

Teaching and Learning in the Hebrew Scriptures

Most of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures contains the giving of the Torah (law/instruction) from God, and the subsequent history of how Israel was and was not faithful to God's Torah. God is One who first taught:

God is the foremost teacher. Torah is frequently translated "law," but it also means 'teaching' or 'instruction.' Isaiah 40:1-4 challenges the hearer to ponder just who 'taught' God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, 'the path of justice' and 'the way of understanding', indicating that God is the only ultimate 'teacher' of the ways of the world. Isaiah 48:17 states, 'I am the LORD your God, who teaches you for your own good.'²

This view of God as the primary teacher then sets up the call for God's creation, especially humans, to both learn God's teaching, and share this teaching with those who are unaware of God's teaching. God's teaching is not just a transmission of a body of knowledge, but a teaching that calls the learners to an active, changed life, in which all knew God's guidance:

Obedience to the law is a constant theme in the Old Testament, illustrating the Hebrew concept of learning. Teaching and learning in the Old Testament did not involve only the communication of information but also instruction in the will of God and understanding how to live. The teacher was to teach people to *obey* the commandments of God, not simply to know them. In fact, knowledge was so linked to action in the Hebrew mind that the people could not claim to *know* what they did not do.³

The call to serve in the ministry of teaching became part of the care of children, with the parents of those children as the primary teachers:

The impression left by the book of Proverbs is that parents taught their children at home. Proverbs uses familial language to emphasize the authority of parental

2. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, ed. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, S-J, Vol 5 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 480.

3. Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 24.

teaching, which took two forms; sentential sayings and instructions. Both mothers and fathers offer advice about coping in a society afflicted with much adversity, chief of which is sexual temptation, but also laziness and drunkenness.⁴

Deuteronomy 6, with the *Shema* as the key idea, sets up a pattern for teaching throughout the day, in the midst of one's daily tasks:

The Shema (Deut 6:4-9) accentuates the educational responsibility of every Israelite. Besides commanding wholehearted devotion to Yahweh, it enjoins every parent to teach the Torah, especially the Decalogue, to children from morning until evening. It specifically mentions the following times: when sitting at home, when walking on paths, when going to bed, and when rising from sleep.⁵

This responsibility to teach children as the adults have been taught by God is an important theme resounding in the Scriptures, and is at the heart of this thesis:

He [God] charges them [the Israelites] to teach their children to observe the laws of God: *Teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons* (v. 9), *that they may teach their children*, v. 10. {1.} Care must be taken in general to preserve the entail of religion among them, and to transmit the knowledge and worship of God to posterity; for the kingdom of God in Israel was designed to be perpetual, if they did not forfeit the privilege of it. {2.} Parents must, in order hereunto, particularly take care to teach their own children the fear of God, and to train them up in an observance of all his commandments.⁶

The Hebrew Scriptures not only encourage adults to teach as God has taught, but also for the learner (of every age) to be open to learning:

While the teacher is encouraged to diligently and incisively teach, it is assumed that the student will be open and willing to receive this instruction. Other passages of Scripture, in particular the Book of Proverbs, provide clear injunctions for children to be attentive to the instruction of their parents. Teachers

4. Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary*, D-H, Vol 2, 198-199.

5. Sakenfeld, *New Interpreter's Dictionary*, D-H., 203.

6. Matthew Henry Notes, Vol 1 (Deuteronomy), Chapter 4, Section 6, as found in BibleWorks 8, copyright 1992-2008.

in the context of Jewish life were primarily parents, and Deuteronomy 6 therefore focuses on this role.⁷

There are several significant words in the Hebrews Scriptures that English versions have translated as teaching, learning, instruction, and law. The verb *lamad* and the noun *torah* are the primary words, bringing several meanings:

The words for learning, teaching, and instruction in both Hebrew and Greek show a bias in Scripture that God, the Teacher, has called us to teach. The primary Hebrew word for learn/teach is לָמַד *lamad*. The word for “instruction”, תּוֹרָה *towrah* or תֹּרָה *torah* has usually been translated as “law”, but carries more of an educational emphasis than a judicial one.⁸

1. לָמַד *lamad*. This means to learn and to teach.⁹ But for today’s learners as well as for ancient ones this learning is to change one’s life:

But hearing is not the same as learning. It is quite possible to hear instruction and fail to learn it...Moses states that he wanted the people to learn to fear the Lord. The word translated, ‘learn’ (*lamath*) is the most common Hebrew word for learning. It implies a subjective assimilation of the truth being learned, an integration of the truth into life.¹⁰

As might be expected, the verb (*lamad*) occurs most frequently in the prophetic writings, the Psalms, and Deuteronomy. Instruction was usually provided by one’s father

7. Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: an Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), 19.

8. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an appendix containing Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), BibleWorks, v.8.

9. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

10. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual*, 25.

(Deut 6:20ff) ¹¹ The verb *lmd* refers to learning and instruction of all sorts.... From his father or mother a young man could learn either what was useful or necessary for life... ¹² For example, Moses is recorded in Deuteronomy 11:19 as saying, “**Teach** them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

2. תּוֹרָה towrah or תּוֹרָה torah, which carries the meaning of both law as well as direction and instruction. ¹³ This law/instruction was viewed as coming straight from God, and brought the call to live under God’s guidance:

The precepts and divine laws that Moses was to make know (Ex 18:16, 20) were nothing other than a public proclamation of the oracles he had received from God. ... Thus *tora* denotes an instruction or behavioral norm whose authority and binding force depends on its source. A word revealed by God takes the form of a law or an oracle. (*dabar*) of Yahweh. ¹⁴

Torah, which became the title for the 1st Five books of the Old Testament, is this authoritative teaching from God, and is so given that not only the elite know God’s will, but all of God’s people know God’s will:

The *tora* is an authoritative teaching... that contains the rules of life, made known originally at Horeb. They come from God mediated through Moses, the greatest prophet and lawgiver. It is a teaching summarized in fixed form as *seper hattora*, (the Book of the Law) a book to be read and studied by all Israel, from the king to the last Israelite.... It is a document preserved in the ark of the covenant in order

11. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, ed., translated by Douglas W. Stott, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol VIII (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, English Translation 1997), 5.

12. Botterweck, *Dictionary*, Vol VIII, 9. See also Deuteronomy 4:5, 4:10 31:12, Psalm 25:4, Jeremiah 31:34, and Isaiah 1:17.

13. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

14. Botterweck, *Dictionary*, Vol. XV, 640.

to serve as a witness against Israel (Deut 31:24-29) so that Israel can no longer claim that God's will is unknown, and finally in order that all Israelites may fulfill the words of the Torah (32:46).¹⁵

The composer of Psalm 1:2 speaks of the *torah* in this way, "...but their delight is in the **law** of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night."

3. יָרָא *yarah*. This verb initially means to throw, or shoot or pour. In some forms it means to cast the teaching, direct, inform, point out.¹⁶ As with the image of someone throwing something to someone else, this word carries an understanding that both the teacher and the learner are part of the process:

In nearly every occurrence (in the hiphil form) the verb can be translated 'teach' or 'instruct,' almost always with a double object: 'teach someone something.' The root represents a concept with a *Sitz im Leben* in teaching and catechesis. It presupposes a relationship between two personal (or personally conceived) entities: the instructor possesses or claims authority over the other; the recipient of instruction has or should have certain expectations of the teacher.¹⁷

An example of the use of this word is in Exodus 4:12, "Now go, and I will be with your mouth and **teach** you what you are to speak."

4. זָהַר *zahar* Coming from an image of light, this word means to send out light, to enlighten, to admonish, warn, teach,¹⁸ as in Exodus 18:20, "...**teach** them

15. Botterweck, *Dictionary*, Vol. XV, 643. See also Exodus 13:9, Proverbs 1:8, Isaiah 2:3.

16. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

17. Botterweck, *Dictionary*, Vol. VI, 339. See also Job 12:8, Psalm 119:33, 2 Chronicles 6:7.

18. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also Psalm 19:11, Ezekiel 3:17.

the statutes and instructions (*torah*) and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do.” The words *zahar* and *lamad* are used together in Exodus 18:20 to remind Moses that he is not just to pronounce, but to show the people how to live:

...Moses’ adviser expects him to exercise the function of a ‘teacher’ who is required to do more than merely make formal pronouncements. The terms *zhr* (hiphil) and *yd*’ (hiphil) now stand in correspondence (Ex 18:20): ‘enlightening’ instruction parallels making know the way men must walk and act.¹⁹

5. אָלַף *‘alaph* This word, meaning to learn/teach, is used only three times in Job and once in Proverbs (22:25).²⁰ It is written in Job 33:33 “If not, listen to me; be silent, and I will **teach** you wisdom.”

6. מוּעָר *muwcar* This noun carries an understanding of discipline and rebuke along with that of instruction.²¹ As recorded in Isaiah 53:5, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the **punishment** that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.”

7. שָׁנַן *shaman*. This verb means to whet, sharpen, and then teach diligently.²² This is a primary word in Deuteronomy 6, an explicit chapter on the ways of teaching. The author of Deuteronomy 6:7 sharply teaches, “**Recite** them to your children and talk

19. Botterweck, *Dictionary*, Vol. IV, 43.

20. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

21. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also Proverbs 1:7.

22. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

This directive to teach in all aspects of life is a call that comes through the ages to teachers and learners yet today:

The primary focus in Deuteronomy 6 is parents and their essential role in education. Despite the multiplicity of educational influences today, parents are still the primary educators who actively or passively determine what influences their children. The challenge is for the Christian church to equip parents for their roles as ministers and educators in their homes and in the choice of other educational influences in the lives of their children.²³

Teaching, learning, admonishing, enlightening, teaching sharply (or clearly), teaching that is delight and teaching that is a corrective or admonition, teaching that assumes there is a relationship between the teacher and the learner: all of these understandings come to today's learner from the Hebrew Scriptures. They speak of the God who teaches in all these forms. They speak of the ways teachers yet need to teach, and learners need to learn. In this way God is glorified, and continuing generations know of God's awesome goodness and grace.

Teaching and Learning in the New Testament

The word-concepts of the Old Testament point us both to God, the Prime Teacher, and to the ministry of those who teach, especially parents, and those who teach the young. Teaching/learning in the New Testament is also understood as action, but the

23. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues*, 20.

focus is placed on Jesus, who, as God, is Prime Teacher, and who calls the disciples to follow. It is in the ministry of teaching that Jesus shows one of his primary identities:

Jesus Christ reveals to us more deeply who God is by teaching us about God, and it is little wonder that on the morning of the Resurrection, Jesus is called teacher (John 20:16). It is also noteworthy that Jesus commands his disciples to 'make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you? (Matthew 28:19-20).²⁴

As in the Hebrew Scriptures, teaching was not just an assimilation of a body of knowledge, but rather that which changes the learner:

Jesus' purpose as a teacher was to influence the experiences of his students so that their lives would be different. He wanted them to experience God as their Father and to live in the reality of that relationship. Jesus wanted them to live righteously in obedience to the command of God and to experience fullness of life in relationship to God. His objective as a teacher was to touch the lives of his students.²⁵

Certainly the love of God expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures, and presented most clearly as steadfast love (*hesed*), is throughout the Old Testament. But *agape* love took on a deeper meaning in the teachings of Jesus:

Teaching in the early church took the form of teaching the New Torah or the law of love and the Beatitudes. This form of teaching is found predominately in Jesus' presentation of the New Torah in the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. The Christian teaching permeated the homes and the weekly gatherings of followers of Jesus. Being a Christian meant being in covenant with God and agreeing to live in a certain way, and showing others that one is a believer.²⁶

This teaching of love carried with it a lifestyle for the early Christian:

24. Bozzuti, *Informed by Faith*, 6.

25. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual*, 33.

26. John L. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Perspectives* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002), 7.

The followers of Jesus in the early centuries of the church carried on the Savior's emphasis on lifestyle content. In the early church Christianity was often referred to as 'The Way,' namely the entire pattern of life, or lifestyle. In the catechumenate of the early church, stress was placed not simply on knowing the basic tenets of Christianity, but far more importantly on living an acceptable Christian lifestyle.²⁷

This concept of teaching, in which the disciple was to live a new life, was not only central to Jesus, but to St. Paul as well:

...[I]t was the practice of the apostle Paul to proclaim the gospel in a new territory and then remain to teach the converts the mysteries of Christ so that their lives might be changed. ...The goal of this proclamation was that Paul might present everyone perfect, or mature and complete, in Christ. Faithful proclamation and instruction in the Word were done so that lives might be changed by obedience to the Word.²⁸

Throughout the corpus of the New Testament words in Greek offer to today's understanding the concepts of following, of learning, and of being a disciple. Listed here are some of the key words used for learning/teaching:

1. διδάσκω *didasko* This verb means to teach, to be a teacher.²⁹ "According to the unanimous witness of the Gospels *didaskain* was one of the most prominent functions of Jesus in His public ministry."³⁰ He takes the Hebrew understanding of *lamad* and

27. Joseph S. Marino, ed., *Biblical Themes in Religious Education* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1983), 25.

28. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual*, 28.

29. Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Abridged and Revised Thayer Lexicon)* (Ontario, Canada: Online Bible Foundation, 1997), BibleWorks, v.8.

30. Gerhard Kittell, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromily, translator & ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol II (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964), 139.

transforms it into a teaching about Him. “This claim, which has as its goal the education and reformation of man according to the will of God (cf Matt 5:48), becomes a reality in the teaching of Jesus. For this reason He is the end of the Law as the Rabbis conceived it...(Romans 10:4)”³¹ As recorded in Matthew 11:1 “Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to **teach** and proclaim his message in their cities.” All teaching is now focused in Jesus, the center of the teaching material as well as the learning of the disciple:

The usage (of *didasko*) of the early Church corresponds to the change which the word *didaskalia* had undergone prior to its acceptance into the Church’s vocabulary. *Didaskalia* now meant the ‘sum of teaching’ and especially of that which had come down from the lips of the apostles. Instead of pastors and advisers of their congregations, the apostles had now become teachers of the Church, which was permanently grounded in their teaching, ie in their way of proclaiming Jesus.³²

2. **μανθάνω** *manthano*. This verb means to learn, to be informed.³³

3. **μαθητής** *mathetes* The noun form of *manthano* is the one who is the learner, the pupil.³⁴ This word, following previous thoughts in this thesis, carries not just a person receiving a body of knowledge, but rather a life-changing way of following:

...[I]t is with some astonishment that we find only 25 occurrences of *manthano* in the whole of the NT....*didasko* is for time as frequent... This needs the more emphasis in view of the fact that *mathetes* is the most common word to denote the men whom Jesus associated with Himself. The linguistic findings, and investigation of the various passages, show that *akolouthein* {following} rather

31. Kittell, *Dictionary*, 140. See also Mark 8:31, Luke 12:12, Colossians 2:7.

32. Kittell, *Dictionary*, 163.

33. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

34. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

than *manthanein* {knowing} is the true mark of the *mathetes*. This is what corresponds to the preaching of Jesus. His concern is not to impart information, not to deepen an existing attitude, but to awaken unconditional commitment to Himself.³⁵

“Since early Christian proclamation, so far as we can see, was from the very first witness to Jesus, and not the reception and transmission of His own proclamation, this is a finding of great significance. It bases this fact, whose authenticity has often been disputed, on the personal relation of the disciples of Jesus to Him.”³⁶ This is expressed in Matthew 11:29, “Take my yoke upon you, and **learn** from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

4. **κατηχέω** *katecheo* Coming from the understanding of sounding towards or down upon, this word means to teach orally, or instruct.³⁷ “In the NT *katexeo* is used in sense a. ‘to tell about something,’ also (in the) pass(ive tense). ‘to receive news of something.’ ... Paul himself uses *katexeo* exclusively in (the)sense... ‘to give instruction concerning the content of faith.’”³⁸ In Galatians 6:6, Paul reminds the *katecheo*-teachers, “Those who are **taught** the word must share in all good things with their **teacher**.” In this passage Paul is pointing to a method of teaching already present in the early church:

[Galatians] 6:6 draws a contrast between the *katexoon* who gives instruction in Christian doctrine and the *katexoumenos* who receives this instruction.... The word selected was in fact very apt to assume the exclusive sense of Christian instruction, and it finds an echo today in the word ‘catechism.’ This was

35. Kittell, *Dictionary*, Vol IV, 406.

36. Kittell, *Dictionary*, Vol IV, 455. See also Matthew 16: 24, John 8:31, Philippians 4:9.

37. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

38. Kittell, *Dictionary*, Vol III, 638. See also Luke 1:4.

particularly true when *katexeo* was specifically used for the instruction given before baptism, and the one preparing for this sacrament was called a catechumen.³⁹

An early method of the teacher speaking the instruction and the learner repeating back the information was an ancient pattern of teaching, hence the use of the word *catechesis*:

...[T]he New Testament also uses the word *catechesis* to refer to the teaching of the early apostles. This term, derived from the Greek Verb *to echo*, is still used by many in the Christian church to describe Christian teaching and education... The Apostle Paul used the term when referring to the oral instruction in the contents of the faith.⁴⁰

5. ἀκολουθέω *akoloutheo* This word refers to the one who follows, who accompanies someone.⁴¹ In many churches today an acolyte is one who attends in the liturgical leadership. It is used also in the New Testament as one, such as a disciple (learner) who follows, such as in Matthew 4:20 “Immediately they left their nets and **followed** him.” In the New Testament, this following is centered on the one to follow, Jesus:

The disciple leaves everything to go after Jesus (Mk 10:28; Lk 5:11). This implies, however, that *akolouthein* signifies self-commitment in a sense which breaks all other ties (Mt 8:22; Lk 9:61). The exclusiveness of the NT use arises from the fact that for primitive Christianity there is only one discipleship and therefore only one following, namely, the relationship to Jesus.⁴²

39. Kittell, *Dictionary*, Vol III, 639.

40. Elias, *History*, 18.

41. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

42. Kittell, *Dictionary*, Vol I, 214. See also Matthew 10:38, John 8:12, John 10:27.

Instructed in the ancient traditions and faith of Israel the authors and recorders of the New Testament took their understanding of the transmission of faith into their life-changing encounter with God-in-flesh Jesus. Education became not only a body of knowledge about Jesus, but also a relationship with Him, a relationship in which the disciple would learn and follow. The New Testament gives the reader windows into how this teaching was accomplished, but the key is that the learner became the disciple of Jesus.

Other Scriptural Words Relevant to Confirmation

In addition to the word-concepts of teaching and learning, there are others in both Hebrew and Greek that form the basis for the Church's understanding of confirmation ministry. Listed below are faith and instruction of children, and then the liturgical actions of anointing, the laying on of hands, and baptism.

Faith is "...the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). Faith in the God of grace shown most clearly in Jesus is the goal of education, a faith that not only is an accumulation of knowledge, but also is a belief in this awesome God, trust that this God is present and active in one's life, a following of this God in ways of love, and a hope in the present and eternal promises of God. As was presented in the Scriptures regarding a relationship with the Triune God, faith is a relationship:

The object (of faith in the Old Testament) is principally God, secondarily humans or institutions insofar as God is working in and through them.... The relational quality is based on the fact that our faith is a response to God's self-revelation. He invites us to enter into communion with himself. That call-response in the Old Testament is centered on the covenant. In the New Testament it is centered on Jesus Christ and his self-sacrifice on the cross. Through him and

his sacrifice God reveals himself to us and invites us into communion with himself and with each other.⁴³

One of the pivotal stories of faith in the Hebrew Scriptures is that of Abraham, who risked everything as he was willing to sacrifice his son at the direction of the God that he had been following:

The risk Abraham took was to believe that this ‘new god’ was honest, knew what he was talking about, and had the power to make it work. Thus he trusted enough to risk his whole future to this God rather than to his family, friends, city of origin, and habitual life....Abraham’s faith was essential for the foundation of the promised nation. Both Paul and James return to his example when they discuss faith.⁴⁴

Faith/trust in God as revealed in the Bible is centered on a relationship with God, a following of God’s call, and a request to God that the disciple not be put to shame for his/her faith/trust:

Several Hebrew words are frequently used. *batah* is to feel safe, to trust; *hasah* is to seek refuge in something or someone; and *he’emin* (related to ‘aman) is to be sure in the mind about something or someone, and so as a result to trust in it or them. The range of meanings of *he’emin* is perhaps closest to the English word ‘faith’ (balanced between belief and trust), that of *batah* closest to the English word ‘trust.’ *he’emin* and *ne’eman*, related in origin, are also related in meaning. We want the objects we believe in and put our faith in (*he’emin*) to be truly solid and reliable (*ne’eman*). We don’t want them to let us down.⁴⁵

The primary words in both Testaments that give depth to one’s understanding of faith include:

1. **בָּטַח** batach means to trust, have confidence in,⁴⁶ as in 2 Kings 18:5 “He (Hezekiah) **trusted** in the LORD the God of Israel; so that there was no one like him

43. Marino, *Biblical Themes*, 121.

44. Marino, *Biblical Themes*, 124.

45. Marino, *Biblical Themes*, 122-123.

46. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also Psalm 13:5, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 12:2.

among all the kings of Judah after him, or among those who were before him.”

2. **חָסָה** chasah. This verb carries a sense of having or seeking refuge, trusting in one who will keep one safe,⁴⁷ as in Psalm 71:1, “In you, O Lord, I take **refuge**; let me never be put to shame.”

3. **אָמַן** 'aman This verb, carried directly into English, has meanings of support and confirmation. It is used to refer both to pillars in a building, and the strength of one's trust and assurance.⁴⁸ The author of Genesis refers to Abraham with this kind of sure faith, and recorded in Genesis 15:6 “And he **believed** the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

This word comes at the end of many prayers, so that the congregation may give their approval for what has been prayed:

The best-known word built from the root 'mn is '*amen*' which was transliterated into the Greek of the NT as *amen*, and from there became a part of the language of the Christian Church... 'Amen' introduces the wish that God would give his blessing to that which had already been planned and said. ...[The] statements might be paraphrased this way in English: 'Precisely! I feel the same way about it, may God do it.'⁴⁹

4. **παρακαταθήκη** parakatatheke This Greek word refers to a deposit or trust, or correct knowledge to be held firmly and faithfully.⁵⁰ Paul writes to Timothy, “...guard

47. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 2 Samuel 22:3, Psalm 34:8.

48. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also Exodus 4:5, 1 Chronicles 17:23, Psalm 93:5.

49. Botterweck, *Dictionary*, Vol 1, 320.

50. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 2 Timothy 1:14.

what has been **entrusted** to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (1 Timothy 6:20)."

5. ἐλπίζω *elpizo*. Hope is the key understanding here.⁵¹ Recorded in Romans 8:24, Paul writes, "For in **hope** we were saved. Now **hope** that is seen is not **hope**. For who **hopes** for what is seen?"

6. πείθω *peitho*. This verb means to persuade, and then to trust and have confidence.⁵² Paul writes in Romans 8:38, "For I am **convinced** that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers..."

7. πίστις *pistis*. Here is the classic word for faith, belief, assurance.⁵³ Paul, writing in Ephesians 2:8, asserts, "For by grace you have been saved through **faith**, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

One author helps the reader understand some of the depth of the word, *pistis*:

English raises a special problem in translation. English has no convenient verb relating adequately to the noun 'faith.' We have the verb 'to believe' for the noun 'belief,' the verb 'to trust' for the noun 'trust.' But there is no verb 'to faith' for the noun 'faith.' Translators frequently render the Greek verb *pisteuo* by the English verb 'to believe.' Unfortunately our English 'to believe' emphasizes the intellectual aspect of the concept much more than the Greek *pisteuo* does, tempting us to overlook the aspects of trust, self-commitment, and obedience. It would be better often to paraphrase, using an expression like 'to put your faith in' or 'to have faith.'⁵⁴

Throughout Scripture the words for faith and trust carry a similar understanding

51. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 1 Corinthians 15:9, Hebrews 11:1.

52. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 2 Timothy 1:5, Hebrews 2:13.

53. Thayer, *Lexicon*, Bible Works. See also Luke 17:6, Romans 3:27-28, James 2:17.

54. Marino, *Biblical Themes*, 133.

that learning and faith lead to trust and service. It therefore follows that the faith formation in our young people likewise develops into faithful living in grace.

Instruction of Children is a goal of Christian education as defined in Eph 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The gospel of Jesus, with its emphasis on becoming like children to enter the kingdom, added a new nuance to a patriarchal system of education, although the children’s duty to obey the parents is conventionally stressed (Eph 6:1). Parents and leaders were called to teach, so that learners would know from their youngest age about the gospel of Jesus:

As in Judaism, Christian education was primarily religious and ethical. This education was the responsibility of both fathers (Col 3:21) and mothers (1 Tim 5:4) and was an important criterion for the selection of church leaders (1 Tim 3:4, 12; Titus 1:6). Also following the Jewish example (compare 2 Tim 1:15; Acts 16:1), the Pastoral Epistles formulate the education ideal to ‘know from childhood’ the ‘sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ’ (2 Tim 3:15).⁵⁵

From the days of the early church there were methods and formulae used to teach both about Jesus and about the way to follow him:

Probably connected with baptism there was a special catechesis (Rom 6:17) including confessional formula (1 Cor 15:3-5) and Jesus’ sayings (Matt 28:19-20). . . . The exhortation of children and younger believers had its own place in the community instruction (Col 3:20; 1 Tim 5:1-2). Teaching/learning activities were so prominent that the early Christian groups are classified by some as ‘scholastic communities.’⁵⁶

It is shown throughout Scripture that parents (and the faith community) were

55. Sakenfeld, *New Interpreter’s Dictionary D-H*, Vol, 2, 194.

56. Sakenfeld, *New Interpreter’s Dictionary D-H*, Vol, 2, 194. See also Psalm 34:11, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, 2 Timothy 3:15.

charged with teaching their faith to the young. From the days of the Exodus through the New Testament the passing on of the faith was required, so that all may know the Lord, and the Lord's ways. Moses has recorded in Exodus 10:2, "...and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I have made fools of the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them-- so that you may know that I am the LORD."

This section on the instruction of children may seem a bit redundant in this thesis, but it is here to emphasize and highlight the strong call and expectation from the whole of Scripture that adults and leaders pass the faith on to the next generations. How that happens in this author's context is explored in the rest of the thesis.

Anointing with oil was a ritual action used in both Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, anointing with oil was that ritual action of consecrating a king or prophet. The anointing became the symbol of God's call and mission. The Hebrew word, מָשִׁיחַ (*mashiach*), which comes from 4886 מָשַׁח *mashach*, has been transliterated into English as Messiah. The Messiah is God's "anointed One", as in Isaiah 45:1, where Isaiah has God speaking about his anointed, Cyrus. That understanding continued into the Greek of the New Testament, where the word Χριστός *Christos* comes from one of the words for anointing, χρίω *chrio*. "The language of anointing or sealing is used in connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit in several New Testament texts, specifically 2 Cor. 1:22 and Eph. 1:13; 4:30."⁵⁷

57. Frank C. Senn, "End for Confirmation," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 3, no 1 F (1976), 47.

1. מָשַׁח mashach, meaning to smear, anoint, consecrate.⁵⁸ Moses anointed Aaron, as recorded in Leviticus 8:12, “He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and **anointed** him, to consecrate him.”

2. יָצַק yatsaq, which means to pour or flow,⁵⁹ as in Leviticus 8:12 (see paragraph above).

3. ἀλείφω aleipho. This is one of the Greek words for anointing.⁶⁰ According to Mark 6:13, the disciples were sent out, and, “They cast out many demons, and **anointed** with oil many who were sick and cured them.”

4. χρίσμα chrisma. This noun refers to the ointment, or the act of anointing.⁶¹ The author of 1 John 2:20 writes to his readers, “But you have been **anointed** by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge.”

5. χρίω chrio. This verb form is the one of anointing.⁶² According to Luke 4:18, when Jesus preaches his first sermon in Capernaum, he quotes from Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has **anointed** me to bring good news to the poor...”

6. μυρίζω murizo. This verb for anoint is only used once in the New Testament,⁶³ in Mark 14:8 when Jesus referred to the woman who anointed his feet,

58. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 1 Samuel 10:1, Isaiah 61:1.

59. Brown, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 2 Kings 9:6.

60. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also John 11:2, James 5:14.

61. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 1 John 2:27.

62. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also 2 Corinthians 1:21, Hebrews 1:9.

63. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks.

“She has done what she could; she has **anointed** my body beforehand for its burial.”

Anointing with oil has had a rich tradition among people of faith. As sons and daughters of the King new disciples are anointed with oil at their baptism, not only the mark of the seal of the Holy Spirit, but as a call to service, even as ancient Israelite kings were anointed.

Baptism is the ritual action so central to the New Testament. Believers could come to John the Baptist on a re-occurring basis to be baptized for the repentance of sins. Jesus entered into this baptism by John, but it was rather to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). As the entrance into the Body of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, baptism is key to Christian theology and practice.

The word, βαπτίζω baptizo, has immersion as its primary meaning. One was submerged, or bathed, or cleansed by being fully in the water.⁶⁴ In Matthew 28:19, at the Great Commission, Jesus commissions his disciples, charging them to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

The theology and history of baptism will be explored in greater depth in this thesis, but here the point is that the water-ritual of baptism is the primary entrance into the Church. It must be said here as well that the Church has different practices regarding the amount of water used in baptism. For Lutherans and some other liturgical denominations the amount of water is not the key issue in baptism, but rather the

64. Thayer, *Lexicon*, BibleWorks. See also Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Titus 3:4-5.

promises of God are. For Orthodox and many other Protestant churches full immersion is essential. In baptism we die and rise in Christ (Rom 6:4). Immersion is the fullest expression of this theological fact. But for this author, God works in baptism because of God's promises, not because of the amount of water used.

Laying on of Hands is another ritual of the church that has an ancient practice. In the Old Testament hands were laid on kings and prophets as part of their consecration (1 Samuel 10:1), and on animals, as part of their consecration for sacrifice (Numbers 8:12). In the New Testament, the laying on of hands was to bring healing (Mark 8:25), was an imparting of the Holy Spirit, and/or an occasion for the Holy Spirit to do the Spirit's work, sometimes accompanying the ritual of baptism. The seven "deacons" were commissioned (Acts 6:6), Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritans (Acts 8:17), Ananias brought healing to Saul's sight, as well as the infilling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), Barnabas and Saul were commissioned (Acts 13:3), Paul laid hands on the Ephesians (Acts 19:6), and Paul healed the father of Publius (Acts 28:8).

One question that the church has struggled with is the purpose of such liturgical actions and the timing of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As will be explored in the historical section some in the church believed that certain "portions" of the Holy Spirit came at different times into the believer's life.

When did the Holy Spirit come into the life of the believer, and how was the infilling of the Holy Spirit mediated? As recorded in just the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit manifested the Spirit's self in these ways, sometimes without ritual actions, sometimes before or after such actions, sometimes with the accompaniment of the gifts of tongues and prophesy, and sometimes without the evidence of such gifts:

1. 2:1f- With great power, but not with previous ritual actions;
2. As a part of baptism, but not with gifts such as speaking in tongues;
 - a. 2:41 – after Peter’s Pentecost sermon;
 - b. 8:38 – Philip & the Ethiopian;
 - c. 9 – Saul’s conversion;
 - d. 16:33 – Paul’s baptizing his jailer;
 - e. 18:8 – Crispus and other Corinthians,
3. 8:12-17- After the ritual of baptism of Samaritans by Philip, Peter, and John;
4. 10:48- Before the ritual of Cornelius’ baptism, and
5. 19:6- After baptism into Jesus, the Ephesians having been baptized earlier into John’s baptism. This laying-on-of-hands was accompanied by tongues and prophesy.

The author of this Thesis sees these texts as pointing to the human inability to “put God in a box”, to define where and when the Holy Spirit works, other than trusting that God is always “working.” And yet, the connection between the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the ritual of laying-on-of-hands and baptism is consistently maintained.

But things change as the church develops, and eventually the rite of baptism and its gifts of the Holy Spirit are separated from the laying on of hands, now called confirmation. But this history is remembered later on in this thesis.

This survey has taken the reader through the Bible, exploring words and concepts relating to the focus of this thesis. There are several themes in this chapter that are carried throughout the thesis. These themes are evident in both Testaments, and foundational for today’s educational understanding. One is that the Triune God is the Prime Teacher, who

has been teaching since the beginning of creation. Another is that humans, created by this God, are called to teach each other, especially the young.

The focus of this education is also centered on God and God's actions. In the New Testament this focus is placed on Jesus, the Incarnate God, who calls us to follow both his actions and his teachings. The Hebrew and Greek words for faith, belief, and trust move the disciple from just knowledge to action and service.

Ritual actions have accompanied the teaching and commissioning, such as the saving act of Baptism, the laying-on-of-hands, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, and anointing with oil. These actions continued into the early Church, and onto today. One concern for the author of this thesis is to make sure that the ritual and liturgical acts we do in the community of the church actually support faith development, and do not box such development to a certain age in a person's lifetime. This concern will be developed in future chapters.

History of Confirmation Between the Biblical and Reformation Periods

As the early Church developed out of the Biblical era, patterns of baptismal practice continued. The questions of how the Holy Spirit came in baptism, who mediated the Presence of the Holy Spirit, what gifts the Holy Spirit brought, when those gifts were brought, and how a believer was assimilated into the Body of Christ all came to bear on the practices of water-baptism, anointing with oil, and laying-on-of-hands.

According to the Didache (late second Century), Justin Martyr (AD 165), Clement of Rome (First Century), Melito of Sardis (AD 180), as well as Apocryphal and schismatic writers such as Marcion (AD 160) in the post-apostolic age, there were many

rites of initiation around the water-baptism, including anointing and hand-laying, but it is unclear that “confirmation” as we now know it was practiced in those days.⁶⁵

During the first 4-5 centuries water baptism and anointing happened consecutively (as it still does for infants and adults in the Orthodox Churches), with cross-signing on the forehead. The Holy Spirit came at either the use of water or oil (anointing). The early Church had established many of the ritual acts of initiation:

But in (Tertullian’s) day (*de Baptismo* was published in 200AD) both acts (water baptism and confirmation) formed part of a rite which was a single whole, in which baptism in water, unction (anointing with oil), consignation (the tracing of the cross on the forehead), and imposition of the hands followed one another without any appreciable interval of time between them.⁶⁶

In these early days of the Church Cyprian acknowledged that the fullness of the Holy Spirit was given even to infants:

Where in Ep. 64.3 (one of Cyprian’s letters) the subject of infant baptism came up for discussion, Cyprian (AD 258) observed that the actual grace given to the child was not granted in greater or less measure according to the age of the recipient...Cyprian believed the Holy Spirit (was) to be given in baptism in the narrower sense of the word even to infants. But at this time infants who were baptized normally received also anointing, hand-laying, and communion.⁶⁷

In a similar manner, Augustine believed in the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, even when the infant was unaware of the Spirit’s presence:

Similarly when in Ep 187.26 (one of Augustine’s writings) Augustine (AD 430) wrote, ‘We say therefore that the Holy Spirit dwells in baptized infants although they know it not...For many centuries it has been safe in the West to assume that an infant, though baptized, has not been confirmed.’⁶⁸

65. J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Confirmation Then and Now* (Chicago: Mundeline, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2005), 29.

66. Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 35.

67. Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 43-44.

68. Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 35.

The baptismal ritual actions of the washing with water, the anointing of oil, and the laying on of hands, all developing from biblical usage, to which consignation (the making of the sign of the cross) was added, all continued to form the practice of how one was baptized, and thus the “means” by which the Holy Spirit entered the new Christian. In his Apostolic Tradition (AD 215), Hippolytus offers “incontrovertible evidence of hand-laying with prayer, anointing, and consignation after baptism.”⁶⁹

But as time went on the practice changed. The ritual of the laying on of hands, which was seen as the responsibility of the Bishop, was separated from the baptismal rite. In the west, after Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Ambrose:

(A)s the church grew in numbers and spread outwards from the place where the bishop resided, there would be many more instances when adult catechumens or the infant children of church people were taken seriously ill, and were not within easy reach of a bishop...there arose the need to baptize in haste without any chance of securing the presence of a bishop.⁷⁰

What developed was a practice in which an infant in a parish was baptized with water, anointed with oil, and over whom was made the sign of the cross. Later, when the Bishop could be present he would then lay his hands on the person. This later act became the ritual (sacrament) of Confirmation. Bishop Faustus set the pattern:

The term ‘confirmation’ was first used by the French councils of Riez and Orange in 439 and 441 to refer to the post-baptismal rite of hand-laying. Later, around 460, Bishop Faustus of Riez [France] preached a sermon on Pentecost regarding confirmation, and setting the understanding for the medieval Church. “Faustus stressed the importance of Episcopal confirmation, claiming that it made those who received it more fully Christian. Confirmation imparted, he claimed, an

69. Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 43-44.

70. Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 126.

additional strengthening of the Holy Spirit over its gift in baptism, where the Spirit was first imparted.⁷¹

In his preaching, Bishop Faustus said:

The preacher imagines a person asking himself, "What good can it do me, after the mystery of baptism, to have the ministration of one to confirm me? So far as I can see, we have not obtained everything from the font, if after the font we still need the addition of something new."

...The preacher used military language to answer the question he had posed. If baptism represents the enlistment of a soldier, at confirmation he is given the arms he needs in order to wage war. Confirmation may not be necessary for those who die at birth; but it is needed for those who grow up to face the trials and temptations of the world.⁷²

The emerging rite of confirmation was used primarily in Faustus' area of Gaul until the time of Charlemagne:

From the time of Faustus in the later fifth century it becomes permissible to use the term "confirmation" in its present liturgical sense...this rite of confirmation was unusual in that it consisted in a single act of hand-laying without any anointing...the practice of confirming by hand-laying was peculiar to southern Gaul, and came to an end there at the latest by the closing years of the eighth century when Charlemagne ordered the use of the Roman rite throughout his empire.⁷³

Since now only Bishops could bring the fullness of the Holy Spirit to baptized children, a time for confirmation developed when the Bishop could visit each parish. "Decisions of these local councils gave priests permission to anoint children they had baptized. Bishops were instructed to visit rural districts regularly to *confirm* these local baptisms by the laying on of hands."⁷⁴ The theology developed to the point that in

71. Robert L Browning and Roy A. Reed. *Models of Confirmation and Baptismal Affirmation* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1995), 10.

72. Senn, *End for Confirmation*, 5.

73. Fischer, *Christian Initiation*, 134.

74. Browning, *Models*, 10.

Baptism the disciple (infant) received the “partial” gift of the Holy Spirit for salvation, and that in Confirmation that person received a more complete presence of the Holy Spirit, primarily for sanctification. In addition, Confirmation came only at the hands of the Bishop. The Rite of Confirmation developed into something only the bishops had power to accomplish:

The western practice of confirmation was upheld and greatly encouraged by the successful influence of the famous forgery perpetrated during the 800’s known as the *Isadorian Decretals*. This was a collection of fabricated documents drawn up to defend the rights of diocesan bishops against archbishops and cardinals and to claim authority for papal supremacy. One decretal claimed that confirmation had a greater dignity and power than baptism because it was administered by a minister with a higher ecclesiastical office....the medieval theology and practice of confirmation was (formally) canonized at the Council of Florence in 1439 which let Western Christians know finally and officially that in confirmation Christians grow in grace and are strengthened in faith.⁷⁵

This remained (and remains) the traditional understanding of Baptism and Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church. Later, in the time of the Reformation, King Henry VIII of England received his title, “The Defender of the Faith” from the Pope, when he wrote against Luther’s re-interpretation of Confirmation. This quotation, from Henry’s work entitled, “The Defense of the Seven Sacraments,” published in 1521, is included here, before the discussion of the Reformation understanding of confirmation, since it follows the theological understanding of classic Medieval Roman Catholic theology:

The scriptures do record the promise of the Spirit (John 15:16) and the imposition of hands by the Apostles (Acts 8:19), Perhaps the Word of Christ regarding the sacrament was given but simply not recorded, for that confirmation is a sacrament is attested not only by the testimony of holy doctors and by the faith of the whole Church, but also in the clearest passages of Holy Scriptures it is shown that by the

75. Browning, *Models*, 10.

visible sign of the Episcopal hand it confers not only grace but also the Spirit of grace Himself.⁷⁶

In the development of Baptism and Confirmation, and their separation, the washing with water, anointing with oil, signing of the cross, and partial gift of the Holy Spirit remained with the baptismal rite, and was performed by the local priest. Confirmation was then firmly separated from the baptismal ritual, carrying its own grace and promise of the Holy Spirit, and offered only by the Bishop with the laying on of hands. Still today, both in the Roman Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church, priests baptize, but the Bishop comes to confirm, since the Bishop is seen as the holder both of apostolic truth and unity with the Church.

The formula for the hand laying attributes the regenerative effect of the baptismal washing to the Holy Spirit. The second, episcopal anointing, accompanied by a signing with the cross, names again the three divine persons confessed in the water. Thus does the bishop seal the events to which he himself may well not have been present, and fittingly so for, as we have seen, the bishop's role in the early Church is one of leadership, especially liturgical leadership, in the promotion of the unity of the Church in its apostolicity. The office of the bishop functions pastorally for the Church, symbolizing the headship of Christ in relation to his liturgically assembled body and assuring the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit, which makes that body participants in the divine life he confers.⁷⁷

On the eve of the Reformation, the Eastern (Orthodox) Church continued the practice of the laying on of hands, consignation, and unction with the water baptism (including the reception of Holy Communion), as it still practices the rite today. The Western Church had developed its seven Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Penance,

76. Paul Turner, *The Meaning and Practice of Confirmation: Perspectives from a Sixteenth-Century Controversy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 20.

77. Browning, *Models*, 53.

Holy Communion, Holy Orders, Marriage, and Extreme Unction). It was into this medieval church that Dr. Martin Luther was raised, became a monk and a Doctor of Theology, taught Bible courses at Wittenberg University, and preached in its churches.

Confirmation History in the Time of Luther's Reformation

In the Medieval Church there were the 7 sacraments that mediated Christ's presence in the life of the believer. Luther's reforming theology re-defined "sacrament" with three qualifiers: 1) it had to be commanded by Christ; 2) there needed to be a physical element; and 3) there needed to be a promised spiritual blessing. Thus, for Luther, there could only be two sacraments, those of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, although, for a time, Luther included Penance (confession and forgiveness) as a third Sacrament. Baptism became not only the entry point of the disciple into Christ and Christ's Church, but the font from which the disciple's life flowed. "The texts of all Christian liturgies of initiation acknowledge that the gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift. Baptism indeed is no human act....The first Christians were manifestly aware that they were living under the governing power of the Holy Spirit."⁷⁸ It is by this power of the Holy Spirit that water becomes the "means" through which God works, and which is called "sacrament." As Luther said

...[B]aptism is a very different thing from all other water, not by virtue of the natural substance but because here something nobler is added, for God himself stakes his honor, his power, and his might on it... This too, is where it derives its nature so that it is called a sacrament, as St. Augustine taught, "accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum," which means that "when the Word is added to the

78. Browning, *Models*, 55.

element or the natural substance, it becomes a sacrament," that is, a holy, divine thing and sign.⁷⁹

When Luther and his followers were asked to defend their faith before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles at Augsburg, Germany, in 1530, Phillip Melanchthon penned the Augsburg Confession (which became the unifying document for Lutherans, who accept the Confession and subsequent documents as the authentic lens through which to view Scripture, and as a faithful exposition of Scripture), listing the theological items in which the reformers agreed with Rome, and those things in which they did not agree. "Concerning baptism it is taught that it is necessary, that grace is offered through it, and that one should also baptize children, who through such baptism are entrusted to God and become pleasing to him. Rejected, therefore, are the Anabaptists who teach that the baptism of children is not right."⁸⁰ This understanding of Baptism has remained central to the Lutheran Church's understanding of the faith:

God brings us into this new relationship by joining us to Christ in Baptism. Through water and the Word, "and our trust in this Word," as Luther wrote in the Small Catechism, God incorporates us into the crucified and risen Christ and his body, the Church. Baptism is one of the "means of grace" God's Spirit uses to create saving faith in people. Whether faith is generated in adults or older children who hear the Gospel and are then baptized, or infants are brought by believing parents to be baptized, faith in Christ follows Baptism. The Spirit uses the proclamation and teaching of the Word and the Sacrament of Holy Communion in the assembly of believers to create and sustain faith in those who are baptized.⁸¹

79. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed. *Book of Concord*, Large Catechism, on Baptism, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 458, and quoted from Augustine's Tractate 80, on John 15:3 (MPL 35:1840; NPNF, ser. 1, 7:344).

80. Kolb, Chapter IX, Augsburg Confession, German Text, *Concord*, 42.

81. The Confirmation Ministry Task Force Report, Adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, September 1, 1993, in Robert L. Conrad, et al., *Confirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 269.

With the focus of the Christian disciple-life emanating from Baptism, confirmation struggled to find its role in the lives of early Lutherans. Everything flowed from Baptism, so then what happened in confirmation? The emphasis placed in scripture on baptism and then highlighted in the Reformation is echoed in the recent Lutheran Church's Confirmation Ministry Task Force Report from the early 1970's, summarizing Luther's understanding of confirmation's place in light of baptism:

The practice of confirmation is not mentioned in Scripture. It flows out of Baptism. It is an implication of Baptism, a ministry to help Christians realize Baptism's gracious benefits: forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and the bestowal of everlasting salvation to all who believe what God has promised, as Luther said in the Small Catechism.⁸²

The Roman Catholic understanding was that Confirmation completed a giving of the Holy Spirit who was only partially granted in Baptism. This understanding did not find credence for the reformers, neither did Luther see that Confirmation qualified in his understanding of what comprises a sacrament:

But for this time we seek sacraments that have been divinely instituted, among which we find no reason that we should number confirmation. Indeed, for the constitution of a sacrament there is required above all things a word of divine promise, by which faith may be exercised. But we read that Christ promised nothing anywhere concerning confirmation. For this reason it is sufficient to regard confirmation as a certain churchly rite or sacramental ceremony, similar to other ceremonies, such as the blessing of water and the like.... Still, these things cannot be called sacraments of faith, because they have no divine promise connected with them, neither do they save; but the sacraments do save those who believe the divine.⁸³

82. Conrad, *Confirmation*, 268.

83. J.J. Pelikan and H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann, ed., *Luther's works*, vol. 36: *Word and Sacrament II* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1954) 90-92.

Also, in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, written as a more lengthy exposition on the Augsburg Confession in 1531, Philip Melchthon, Luther's friend and primary co-reformer wrote:

Confirmation and extreme unction are rites inherited from the Fathers, which even the church does not require as necessary to salvation, since they lack the command of God. Hence it is useful to distinguish these rites from the previous ones (of Baptism and Holy Communion), which have the expressed command of God and a clear promise of grace.⁸⁴

Part of Luther's disagreement with the current understanding of Confirmation lay in the belief that Bishops were the ones to confirm, and that it was somehow their power that brought the gifts of the Holy Spirit to Confirmation, completing the disciple's baptism. In typical style Luther speaks out against such teaching:

Especially to be rejected is confirmation, that deceitful mumbojumbo of the episcopal idols. It has no foundation in Scripture. The bishops are only deceiving people with their lies when they say that grace, a character, a mark are conferred in confirmation. It is rather the character of the beast, Revelation 13[:16–17]. A Christian should not, at the peril of his soul, base his faith on human fantasy, which will surely betray and deceive him, but only on the Word of God, who does not lie.⁸⁵

Philip Melancthon, writing in 1559, reflected on the history of Confirmation:

There was once an examination of doctrine in which individuals used to recite a summary of doctrine and show that they dissented from Gentiles and heretics, and it was a very useful way for educating people, likewise for separating the profane and the religious. Afterwards it became a public prayer, and the Apostles imposed hands on them. Thus they were being presented with manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit. But now the rite of confirmation, which bishops retain, is an utterly empty ceremony. It would be useful however that an investigation and

84. Kolb, Apology of the Augsburg Confession, 230.

85. J.J. Pelikan and H. C. Oswald and H. T. Lehmann, ed., *Luther's works*, vol. 45: *The Christian in Society II* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 8-9.

profession of doctrine be made and a public prayer for the sake of good people, nor would that prayer be futile.⁸⁶

Luther, not accepting the Roman Catholic view of Confirmation, did believe that the rite was one that could be changed, and used with an educational emphasis.

“Confirmation should not be bothered with as the bishops’ desire, but nevertheless we do not find fault that every pastor might investigate the faith from children and if it be good and sincere, he may impose hands and confirm.”⁸⁷

Luther’s understanding came from his passion as a teacher. When he saw how little his people understood the faith, he wrote the *Small Catechism* to be taught by parents to children, and the *Large Catechism*, to be used by pastors in their preaching and teaching:

This sermon has been designed and undertaken for the instruction of children and the uneducated. Hence from ancient times it has been called, in Greek, a “catechism”-that is, instruction for children... (Y)oung people should be thoroughly taught the parts of the catechism (that is, instruction for children) and diligently drilled in their practice.

Therefore, it is the duty of every head of a household at least once a week to examine the children and servants one after the other and ascertain what they know or have learned of it, and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it.⁸⁸

In the Catechism Luther took the keys of faith, asking a question (*Vas is das?* What is this? or What does this mean?) as he explored the depth of the 10

86. Turner, *Meaning and Practice*, 23, as quoted from J.A.O Preus, ed., *Loci Praecipui Theologici 1559* by Phillip Melancthon (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011).

87. Turner, *Meaning and Practice*, 17, as quoted from Luther’s Sermon (15 Marz 1523, WA 11:66).

88. Kolb, Preface to the Large Catechism, *Concord*, 383, based on a sermon of 18 May, 1528.

Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the two sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, as well as material on the Office of the Keys (forgiveness) and Tables (listings) on how one should live faithfully as a spouse, parent, child, or citizen. His call was that the Church, in household and parish, teach these keys of faith.

It may be, that with Luther's reluctance to see Confirmation as a sacrament, Confirmation as a rite might not have survived in the Lutheran Church. But a key for Luther and the Reformers lay in the emphasis on education of children and adults in the faith, and thus the hand-laying rite of Confirmation as an educational ritual continued, especially through Melancthon's efforts:

It is well known that confirmation found its way into the Lutheran Church through Philip Melancthon, who was much influenced in this regard by the humanist concerns of Erasmus and the efforts of Martin Bucer. Erasmus laid great stress on the need to instruct in the faith those who were baptized in infancy, and to require from them a mature public profession of faith. Bucer added the idea of the confirmand submitting himself to the discipline of the Church.⁸⁹

The Sacrament of initiation and discipleship for Luther and the reformers was Holy Baptism. Their theology called them to flow from the gifts and blessings that God gives fully in baptism into a life of learning, of discipleship, of faithfulness. The Roman Catholic Sacrament of Confirmation was re-interpreted into a rite which affirmed that baptismal blessing, was not dependent on the Bishop's action, and was centered in the teaching ministry of the Church.

89. Senn, *End for Confirmation*, 50.

Emphases After the Reformation

In the years following the Reformation the practice and theology of Confirmation has taken several different paths. Each of the following six emphases, laid out in the resource *Confirmation (see following footnote)*, have been more prominent than the others in certain time periods, and each of them may be found as current understandings in different Lutheran congregations today.

The first emphasis is *Catechetical*. In this emphasis the confirmand is instructed and prepared for the Lord's Supper. Until the advent of the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) in 1978, Lutheran adolescents did not receive Holy Communion until the week after their Confirmation. With the changes in the LBW the first reception of Holy Communion is no longer tied to the rite of Confirmation, and second through fifth graders, (depending on each congregation) now receive the Sacrament. Some Lutheran congregations today also follow the Orthodox model and offer communion to infants, following their Baptism.

The *Disciplinary/Hierarchical* emphasis was first espoused by Martin Bucer in Hesse, Germany, in 1538. This understanding combined the training of the confirmand to receive Holy Communion (as with the Catechetical) with the "youth making a vow to surrender himself to Christ and submit to the discipline of the Church."

Through the *Sacramental* emphasis the confirmand receives the Laying on of Hands and the imparting of the Holy Spirit, hearkening back to the Roman Catholic understanding of Confirmation.

In the *Traditional* emphasis there is instruction in the faith followed by the laying on of hands, but the first reception of Holy Communion did not follow in the next week..

Following the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, Philip Spener developed the *Pietistic* emphasis, in which Confirmation was the time in which the youth would “feel” his/her new life following a confession of faith, their preparation for the Lord’s Supper, and a confirmation blessing.

The last of these emphases is that of the *Rationalistic*, which was a reaction of Pietism and a de-emphasizing of sacramental theology. Confirmation was a cultural hallmark in which the Christian summed up his Christianity as a series of virtues to be respected and that he might emulate...now becoming a member of the Church.

Another way to look at these 6 emphases is by describing the drive that is inherent in each. “The catechetical is driven by instruction, Disciplinary/Hierarchical is driven by a vow; sacramental is driven by a rite; the traditional is driven by postponement of First Communion; the pietistic is driven by strongly felt renewal; and the rationalistic is driven by cultural pressures.”⁹⁰

The authors of *Models of Confirmation and Baptismal Affirmation* offer eight different models of Confirmation:

The sealing of the Holy Spirit [since such sealing with oil was not part of baptism]; The completion of infant baptism [where the youth has made a decision to “join the Church” and to discipleship]; Ratification of a person’s baptism [after training and a decision]; Affirmation of baptismal covenant in adolescence with the person comes to a deepened understanding and/or commitment in faith; The Blessing, following baptism, welcoming the new Christian into the Church and at the Lord’s Table [as is the Orthodox practice]; A Separate Sacrament, giving grace [as in the Roman Catholic Church]; A Repeatable Sacrament [when the person’s faith needs focus]; and a Celebration of “Life in the Spirit.”⁹¹

90. Luther Lindberg, “Lutheran Confirmation Ministry in Historical Perspective” in Conrad, *Confirmation*, 52-56.

91. Browning, *Models*, 12.

As one reads through these emphases and models one can understand the complexity of Lutheran Confirmation. To add to the complexity there is an (incorrect) understanding for some that Confirmation is just a rite-of-passage, that the confirmand now knows all he/she needs to know of the faith, and that the Confirmation rite becomes a graduation, a commencement, an end to study and further growth in faith. Alas, many life-long Lutherans follow this understanding, and are comfortable in their adolescent Confirmation faith.

One historical note, once important to generations of Lutherans but no longer espoused, is the tradition of confirming the adolescent on Palm Sunday:

Palm Sunday, which in Europe had normally fallen about one week before spring graduation from school, continued to be observed as the popular day for the confirmation observance, even after school closing and graduation were no longer connected with the rite and were held late in spring. No doubt one reason for the retention of Palm Sunday was that the catechumen could partake of his first Communion during Holy Week, since the Lord's Supper was celebrated only occasionally in most of the Lutheran Churches in America."⁹²

Having gone now through a biblical, theological, and historical understanding of Baptism and Confirmation, now the question may be asked, "how do Lutherans (or this Lutheran) look at Confirmation today?

Confirmation Today

First and foremost, all aspects of the Church, in education, worship, witness to the world, stewardship, etc., are for God's glory. The Church teaches the young because they are gifts of God. But teaching and learning are not for youth only. There is Good News

92. Turner, *Meaning and Practice*, 11.

to be shared through and to all, to the praise of God:

...(T)he question "Why does the church teach?" actually evokes other, even more primary questions.... These questions are *Why does the church exist?* And, *Why does the church exist on earth – in space and in time?* The Westminster catechism famously framed the most primary of all our questions: "What is the chief end of man?" The Larger Catechism answers, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and fully to enjoy Him forever." (as quoted from the Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 1 and answer). Surely the catechism gets it right at this most fundamental of all points. All things, including especially humans, exist ultimately for the glory of God. This is our *telos*, as the Scriptures consistently affirm.⁹³

With all this history as backdrop, the Third Biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, on September 1, 1993, adopted this working definition of Confirmation used today: "Confirmation ministry is a pastoral and educational ministry of the church that helps the baptized through Word and Sacrament to identify more deeply with the Christian community and participate more fully in its mission."⁹⁴

Confirmation ministry is pastoral because the baptized are shepherded in the faith, received the tradition of the Good News as it has been passed down. It is education, because the baptized are taught the keys of the faith. It is of the church, since all pledge to care for the baptized. When a child or adult is baptized, the parents are asked:

As you bring *your children* to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities:

to live with *them* among God's faithful people,
bring *them* to the word of God and the holy supper,
teach *them* the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments,
place in *their* hands the holy scriptures,

93. Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009), 20-21, see also Isaiah 43:7, Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 1:3-14, 3:21, Revelation 4:11.

94. Conrad, *Confirmation*, 266.

and nurture *them* in faith and prayer,
so that *your children* may learn to trust God,
proclaim Christ through word and deed,
care for others and the world God made,
and work for justice and peace.

Do you promise to help *your children* grow in the Christian faith and life?

Next the sponsors are asked:

Sponsors, do you promise to nurture *these persons* in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help them live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?

Then, the whole congregation is asked:

People of God, do you promise to support *name/s* and pray for *them* in *their* new life in Christ?⁹⁵

Coming from the scriptural understanding explored previously in this chapter, the call of the whole community, especially the parents, is to be responsible for the education of God's children. As the young disciples are nurtured in this community, they then take upon themselves the mission and ministry of Christ, to the glory of God. This pastoral and educational ministry of the church takes place in the life of Word and Sacrament, in the midst of worship and praise. But, for Lutherans, it all begins with Christ's act in baptism:

Confirmation ministry does not *complete* Baptism, for Baptism is already complete through God's work of joining us to Christ and his body, the Church. In him is salvation. Moreover, confirmation ministry does not *compete* with Baptism, because confirmation ministry does not save anyone. Identity, mission, discipleship, and vocation, important issues addressed in confirmation ministry, proceed from Baptism. Being baptized into the Church, we find our identity as God's children, forgiven sinners, members of Christ's body.⁹⁶

Dr. John Westerhoff, whose question, "Will our children have faith?" was asked

95. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Holy Baptism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006), 228.

96. Conrad, *Confirmation*, 270.

at the beginning of this thesis, brings the helpful word “conversion” to Lutherans, who are in this confirmation ministry process. The reader is invited to chew on this lengthy quote:

The acquisition of faith was understood in terms of nurture and growth which functionally correspond to a gradual process of schooling. Support for this position was located in a single phrase in Horace Bushnell’s *Christian Nurture* [Yale University Press, 1966]. A child is to grow up as a Christian and never know himself or herself as being otherwise. This dictum may have made sense when it referred to the children of the saints, who were to be nurtured in a church whose membership was restricted to the saints and their offspring. But I contend that the church can no longer surrender to the illusion that child nurture, in and of itself, can or will rekindle the fire of Christian faith in persons or in the Church....

The Christian faith by its very nature demands conversion. We cannot gradually educate persons through instruction in schools to be Christian. There is a basic need to belong to and identify with a faithful community, to own its story as our story, and to have our religious affections nourished.

But persons also need, if they are to grow in faith, to be aided and encouraged to judge, inquire, question, and even to doubt that faith; to be given the opportunity to experiment with and reflect upon alternatives; and to learn what it means to commit their lives to causes and persons. Only after an intellectual struggle with our community’s faith and with an honest consideration of alternatives can a person truly say, ‘I believe,’ – and thereby achieve personal Christian identity. Only then, I contend, can a person live the radical, political, economic, social life of the Christian in the world.

Conversion, I believe, is best understood as this radical turning from ‘faith given’ (through nurture) to ‘faith owned.’ Conversion is radical because it implies ownership and the corresponding transformation of our lives. It implies a reorientation in our thinking, feeling, and willing; a moving from indifference or one form of piety to another.”⁹⁷

This is a ministry of faith development. In this development is the time of instruction and ritual of confirmation, flowing out of baptism, not just a transmission of knowledge and truth, but a conversion that each of the baptized are called to make. Throughout our life we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit, and called to place

97. John H. Westerhoff III., *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 38-39.

ourselves on God's path. As a Presbyterian resource states, "The church does not teach faith solely to ensure that young persons are properly indoctrinated and can talk accurately about faith. Faith is more than the possession of right information; faith is a personal relationship with God revealed in Jesus Christ. Faith is God's gift to believers."⁹⁸

Dr. Craig Nesson repeats the call this way:

The primary goal of confirmation in our time needs to be *Christian formation*... instead of preparing through instruction new converts for baptism and a Christian lifestyle, we aim to prepare the already baptized for an ongoing conversion to the Christian gospel. Our primary task becomes that of instilling a Christian self-understanding in the lives of young people so that they see that loyalty to Jesus Christ makes a difference in who they are and everything they do.⁹⁹

This chapter took the reader on a tour of words and word-concepts in the Old and New Testaments, words translated as teaching, education, faith, trust, and belief. Consistent in Scriptures is the call for parents and the community to teach the young, as we have been taught by God. Ritual actions surrounding educational and transformational events in Scripture were also explored. Historical actions and thoughts highlighted the changing relationships of baptism, confirmation, and education in the life of the disciple during the times of the early church, the Lutheran Reformation, and on into today.

Developmental stages of an adolescent disciple will be the emphasis in Chapter

98. Betty Crowell and David Ng, *Journeys of faith: A Guide for Confirmation-Commissioning*, for use in Presbyterian and Reformed Educational Ministry, Presbyterian Church (USA), (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1990), 3.

99. Craig L. Nesson, "Confirmation as Youth Ministry: The Task of Christian Formation," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 22 no 4 (Ag 1995): 270.

Three. Then on to the question at the heart of this thesis – what can this author and his community do to fulfill the God-breathed mission of faith formation for our youth, as well as supporting parents in this vital ministry? To God be the glory!

CHAPTER 3

Precedent Research on Human Development and Adolescent Needs

After an exploration of the scriptural concepts and words for learning, teaching, and actions involved in baptism, and then a historical look at the development of baptism and confirmation, the focus now is placed on the adolescent and their changes/needs, as well as the needs of parents and the faith community in supporting the adolescent.

Theories of Adolescent Development

First, included here is a historical tour of several of the theories of adolescent development, exploring how society has viewed children and their development. In addition to others, Rolf Muuss is the guide through these selected theories.

The early philosophers seemed to understand that there was a process by which a child became an adult, and that children were different from adults:

[Plato wrote that] [D]uring the first three years of life the infant should be free from fear and pain and sorrow.... From ages 3-6 the child needs sport and social contact with age-mates in order to get rid of his self-will.... He [also] suggested a division of the sexes at age 6.... The meaning of education in this view is to provide experiences for children prior to the development of reason that are nevertheless in agreement with reason when it does develop during adolescence.¹

Aristotle was another philosopher who offered a developmental theory:

Aristotle divided the developmental period into three distinguishable states of 7 years each. The first 7 years he named infancy; the period from 7 to the beginning of puberty, boyhood; and from puberty to 21, young manhood. This

1. Rolf E. Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence*, 6th ed, (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1996), 2.

division of the period of development into three stages was generally accepted during the Middle Ages and recurs in some contemporary theories of development.²

In spite of early understandings of the differences between children and adults, the medieval ages saw children as just a little adult, who should already know how to behave as an adult:

The theological view of human nature as found in the medieval, early Reformation period encompassed several relevant ideas, [such as]...the homunculus idea of instantaneous creation.... During the Dark Ages, it was believed that the child came into the world as a miniature adult. The difference between a child and an adult was considered to be only an quantitative one, not a qualitative.... Th[is] theory...held that children had the same interests as adults and therefore should be treated correspondingly, which meant that adult requirements were put upon them as were enforced by stern discipline.³

By the Renaissance others, like Comenius, developed different theories:

[John Amos] Comenius [1592-1670] accepted these ideas of the Renaissance [that learning was an inductive process beginning with experiences], combined them with Aristotle's classification of development, and advanced a theory of education that was based on psychological assumptions.... For Comenius, development is not uniform, continuous, and gradual, as the homunculus theory of development implies-but each stage of development has its own characteristics, "teachable moments".... Development was seen as a process in which the intellectual functions gain progressively more control over the other aspects of the soul.⁴

Important to future theories, John Locke developed the concept of a *tabula rasa*:

[John] Locke [1632-1704] further developed the theory that there are no innate ideas. Ideas that can be found in consciousness are either obtained through our senses directly or are derived from those ideas that have been obtained through sensations previously. The child's mind, at the time of birth, is, according to an analogy used by Locke, a *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet.⁵

2. Muuss, *Theories*, 4.

3. Muuss, *Theories*, 7.

4. Muuss, *Theories*, 9.

5. Muuss, *Theories*, 10.

By the 1700's theorists saw that play was important in a child's life. "[Jean-Jacques] Rousseau [1712-1778] most strongly opposed the homunculus idea and asserted that it was the plan of nature that children play, live, and behave like children before they become adults."⁶

Stanley Hall proposed recapitulation, in that a child went through the stages of early humans. This interesting theory is important in history, but doesn't hold true for this author:

[G Stanley] Hall [1844-1940] expanded [Charles] Darwin's concept of "biological evolution" into a psychological theory of recapitulation. This theory postulated that the experiential history of *homo sapiens* had become part of the genetic structure of each individual. The law of recapitulation asserted that each individual, during his or her development, passes through stages that correspond to those that occurred during the history of mankind. That is, as the child's development progresses he or she relives the development of the human race from early animal-like primitivism, through a period of savagery, to the more recent civilized ways of life that characterize maturity.⁷

The other primary theorist in this time was Sigmund Freud. Whereas there are questions today about his understandings, this quote points out one significant issue in the adolescent's life, that of the blooming of sexuality at a time when sexual activity is not accepted:

[Sigmund Freud, 1856-1939, believed that] Adolescence proper, brought about by the biological maturation of the reproductive system, is characterized by a rapid increase in sexual tensions demanding gratification.... The magnitude of this situation becomes obvious if one considers that pubescence requires, for the first time since birth, that a basic biological drive, which acquires full strength only as a result of the pubescent growth changes, must be integrated into the personality structure of the young, still-developing adolescent. This fact is complicated further by the traditional social-moral-religious standards, which demand that the

6. Muuss, *Theories*, 12.

7. Muuss, *Theories*, 15.

heterosexual gratification of this drive be postponed until marriage, often as long as 10 to 15 years after the drive acquires its full biological strength.⁸

The modern day is replete with theories on how children develop, but most are centered in the findings of Erickson, Piaget, and Fowler. Eric Erickson formulated his human stages in terms of opposites. For the adolescent, the defining struggle in these years is between personal identity and identity confusion. Jean Piaget's research opened the awareness of thought-development, and about what the human brain can think in each stage. According to David Elkind, Eric Erickson finds the adolescent asking questions of personal identity, communal identity, as well as the identity, purpose, and presence of God:

Adolescence has been characterized by [Eric] Erickson [1950] as the period in the human life cycle during which the individual must establish a *sense of personal identity*, and avoid the dangers of *role diffusion* and *identity confusion*. Identity achievement implies that the individual assesses strengths and weaknesses and determines how he or she wants to deal with them. The adolescent must find an answer to the identity questions: "Where did I come from?" "Who am I?" "What do I want to become?" Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity, must be searched for. Identity is not readily given to the individual by society, nor does it appear as a maturational phenomenon when the time comes, as do secondary sex characteristics. Identity must be acquired through sustained individual effort.⁹

Elkind continues with Erickson's thought, postulating that the brain develops around the ages of 11 & 12, able to go deeper in their concepts:

... [T]he major task of early adolescence [as postulated by Erickson] can be regarded as having to do with *the conquest of thought*. Formal operations not only permit the young person to construct all the possibilities in a system and construct contrary-to-fact propositions they also enable him to conceptualize his own thought, to take his mental constructions as objects and reason about them. Only at about the ages of 11-12, for example, do children spontaneously introduce

8. Muuss, *Theories*, 32.

9. David Elkind, *Children and Adolescents: Interpretive Essays on Jean Piaget*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 51.

concepts of belief, intelligence, and faith into their definitions of their religious denomination.¹⁰

By the 1900's Jean Piaget further developed the changes in childhood, and the child's formal operational thought:

During the last stage [usually 12-15 yrs] there gradually emerge what Piaget [1896-1980] calls formal operations and which, in effect, permit adolescents to think about their thoughts, to construct ideals and to reason realistically about the future. Formal operations also enable young people to reason about contrary-to-fact propositions.

Formal operational thought also makes possible the understanding of metaphor. It is for this reason that political and other satirical cartoons are not understood until adolescence. The Child's inability to understand metaphor helps to explain why books such as 'Alice in Wonderland' and 'Gulliver's Travels' are enjoyed at different levels during childhood than in adolescence and adulthood, when their social significance can be understood.¹¹

James Fowler, 1940, postulated his Stage 3, in which the adolescent was in a Synthetic-Conventional Faith stage, both being similar to others, and absorbing from others:

The faith system of an individual who is in Stage 3 is 'conventional,' in that the conventional believer perceives his or her own faith system as being similar to everybody's or even to an entire congregations. In addition, it is conceptualized as being 'synthetic', which means it still absorbs major faith elements from others. ... As the cognitive ability of adolescence expands and formal operational thinking opens the mind to abstract ideas and concepts, mutual, interpersonal perspective take becomes possible. ... The identity crises that Ericson and Marcia postulate as a crucial adolescent experience in general tends to become, in the process of faith development, a religious or spiritual identity crisis. The typical identity question 'Who am I?' thus expands to include the additional existential, religious components: "Who is God?" "Who am I in relationship to God?" "Does God know me?" "Does God watch me?" "Does God love me?" "Does God care about me as a unique individual?"¹²

10. Elkind, *Children*, 90.

11. Elkind, *Children*, 24-25.

12. Muuss, *Theories*, 272-273.

Important to Piaget's understanding is his concept of disequilibrium/equilibrium, that at each stage the person is presented with new data, which causes that person to deal with disequilibrium, ultimately (in the healthy person) resulting in equilibrium. Certainly one who works with adolescent youth can understand that the young disciple is constantly going through disequilibrium and equilibrium, changing from one moment to the next:

Piaget taught that a person at each stage of development arrives at some sort of equilibrium, defined as "a state of balance or harmony between at least two elements which have previously been in a state of disequilibrium."... [I]t should be noted that Piaget believed that learning takes place when a person is disequilibrated by the introduction of new information or data that stands in contradiction to some part of one's created reality.¹³

For many Lutheran Pastors, confirmation is both the best time in the life of the adolescent, and one of most difficult to teach. As shown by several previous theorists, the adolescent is in the middle of several important changes in their life, including storm and stress, identity crisis, and normalcy:

G. Stanley Hall [1844-1924] proposed that the period of adolescence is inevitably a period of storm and stress. Similarly, psychoanalytic theories have emphasized the universal nature of parent-adolescent conflict, and Erikson [1968] ascribes "a normative identity crisis" to the period of adolescence. Anna Freud [1958] with her often-quoted dictum, "To be normal during the adolescent period is by itself abnormal," takes the most radical position.¹⁴

On the other hand, there is also a balanced approach which reminds us that not Only adolescents are in this constant struggle. There is storm and stress and identity

13. Steven Fortosis and Ken Garland, "Adolescent cognitive development, Piaget's idea of Disequilibration and the Issue of Christian Nurture," in *Religious Education*, 85, (1998) 631-644, as quoted from Jean Piaget, *The Psychology of Intelligence* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950).

14. Muuss, *Theories*, 368-369.

crises in other age groups as well:

[Eric] Erikson was writing during the modern period and his conception of adolescence was colored by the prevailing societal perception of this age group. Now that we have moved into the postmodern era and see adolescence as sophisticated, rather than as immature, the social science depictions of adolescence have changed as well. The following is the stereotypic depiction of modern adolescence:

‘The adolescent presumably is engaged in a struggle to emancipate himself from his parents. ... To facilitate the process of emancipation, he transfers his dependency to the peer group, whose values are typically in conflict with those of his parents. Since his behavior is now largely under the control of peer group members he begins to adopt idiosyncratic clothing, mannerisms, lingo, and other forms of peer group fad behavior. (Bandura 1964)

This portrayal of young people has been challenged by many postmodern psychiatrists. Daniel Offer and his colleagues have collected data to demonstrate that the adolescent years are no more conflictual than are other age periods.¹⁵

This tour through the history of psychological theories of adolescence points to several issues in this thesis, one of which is that the adolescent is in the midst of change, moving between childhood and adulthood, with their own issues and callings in this time. Here is where the church is called to both support and guide the adolescent as well as to help the adolescent’s parents, so that they may continue to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15).

Rapid Change and Self-Identity

The adolescent is in a stage of change and growth in all aspects of their being. As in every stage the person struggles to both remain in what was, and grow into what will be. Often this is visible in the adolescent, as he/she is propelled from childhood into

15. David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Cambridge MA: Da Capo Press, 1998), 16-17, as quoted from Albert Bandura, “The Stormy Decade: Fact or Fiction” *Psychology in the Schools* 1:224-231, (1964), and from Daniel Offer and Judith Boskin, *From Teenage to Youngmanhood: A Psychological Study* (New York: Basic Book, 1975).

young adulthood:

As young adolescents begin the swing toward adulthood, the trapeze bar is still on the side of childhood. However, once that bar has been grasped, the process will continue, and that movement is back and forth. One moment young adolescents want the privileges and security of childhood. The next, they seek independence, wanting no reminders of the past.¹⁶

There are a several markers of this change in the life of the adolescent. One is the rapid pace of change into the new. Modern advances in technology, social networking, science, media, and other aspects of life are changing at an exponential pace.

Another prominent marker in the life of an adolescent is that of adolescent egocentrism. The youth views themselves as being the only one “on stage,” and the one to whom the world is looking. David Elkind, following Jean Piaget, illumines this part of the adolescent’s understanding.

One consequence of adolescent egocentrism is that, in actual or impending social situations, the young person anticipates the reactions of other people to himself. ...In a sense, then, the adolescent is continually constructing, or reacting to, *an imaginary audience*. ...And, since the audience is his own construction and privy to his own knowledge of himself, it knows just what to look for in the way of cosmetic and behavioral sensitivities. ...The notion of an imaginary audience also helps to explain the observation that the affect which most concerns adolescents is not guilt but, rather, shame, i.e., the reaction to an audience.¹⁷

This concept of being on stage points to the understanding the adolescent has of himself or herself that all the world revolves around them:

Formal operational thought not only enables the adolescent to conceptualized his thought, it also permits him to conceptualize the thought of other people; this capacity, however, is the crux of adolescent egocentrism. ...The young adolescent, because of the physiological metamorphosis he is undergoing, is primarily concerned with himself. Accordingly, since he fails to differentiate

16. James C. Wilhoit and John M. Dettoni, ed., *Nurture That Is Christian: Developmental Perspectives on Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 160.

17. Elkind, *Children*, 91-92.

between what others are thinking about and his own mental pre-occupations, he assumes that other people are as obsessed with his behavior and appearance as he is himself. *This belief that others are preoccupied with his appearance and behavior constitutes the egocentrism of the adolescent.*¹⁸

With everyone watching, the adolescent acts and dresses consistently with his or her audience:

A good deal of adolescent boorishness, loudness, and faddish dress is probably provoked, partially in any case, by a failure to differentiate between what the young person believes to be attractive and what others admire. It is for this reason that the young person frequently fails to understand why adults disapprove of the way he dresses and behaves.... [Then] when young people actually meet, each is more concerned with being the observed than with being the observer. Gatherings of young adolescents are unique in that sense that each young person is simultaneously an actor to himself and an audience to others.¹⁹

Keeping in mind the struggles and changes an adolescent deals with, as well as his/her certain mental view of the world, it is vital that those in the Church who work with the youth maintain the teaching ministry of the Gospel, even in the difficult times. Referring to conversations William Yount had with youth he writes:

Thinking through these conversations confirms for me how critical our teaching ministry with teenagers is. They question what they hear at home and at church in order to make their faith real, genuine, and personal. They are struggling with how to live out what they believe, relating biblical truths to real life. At the same time an increasingly non-Christian culture attacks what they learn in their local church youth groups and at home. These are difficult times for youth and even more difficult for adults who respond to God's call to work and teach with them.²¹

18. Elkind, *Children*, 91.

19. Elkind, *Children*, 92.

20. William R. Yount, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 2nd ed., (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), 325.

What an Adolescent Needs

Much of what an adolescent needs could be said for any age group: a sense of meaning, a sense of purpose, a sense of the presence of God, a sense of acceptance. The following is one catalogue of needs:

Teenagers have both general and specific needs of various kinds. Specific needs refer to personal concerns: family problems, conflicts with friends, difficulties at school, self-image frustrations, and the like. These needs are best engaged in private. General needs refer to those common to all teenagers, and are also very helpful to know. Here are a few of them:

1. To believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose.
2. to have a sense of community and deeper relationships.
3. to be appreciated and loved.
4. to be listened to – to be heard.
5. to have practical help in developing a mature faith.
6. to be challenged in what they believe and why.
7. to have spontaneity in life.
8. to experience consistency in adult-youth relationships.²¹

The adolescent seeks to know who he/she is. Part of this search involves the asking of questions. As this quotation illustrates, the adolescent needs to ask questions, so those in ministry to the adolescent need to provide a safe place and guidance where such questions may be explored:

Gobbel [et al] examine the following questions that address the issues and tasks of the adolescent: Who am I? (attaining an identity), Who tells me who I am? (achieving an identity), Whose body is it, anyway? (accepting one's body), What is required of me? (achieving a value system), Am I my neighbor's keeper? (achieving social consciousness).

As they reflect on these questions, educational leaders need to provide a climate in which the adolescent feels free to inquire, question, and debate the critical issues in their lives.²²

21. Yount, *Teaching*, 338.

22. Nelson T. Strobers, "Lifelong Education and Pastoral Ministry," in Robert L. Conrad, *Confirmation: Engaging Lutheran Foundations and Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 238, as quoted from A. Roger Gobbel, Gertrude Gobbel, and Thomas Ridenhour, Sr., *Helping Youth Interpret the Bible* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 10.

Acceptance is a big need for all ages, but especially for the adolescent. In conjunction with acceptance comes meaning and purpose. The disciple is exploring where he/she fits in the community of people, and the community of the church:

Junior highers hunger to be accepted by others, as well as by God. They want to believe in a God who knows them the way they are, and who likes them anyway-despite their inadequacies, faults, limitations and failures. A person at is strongly attracted to an image of a God who is deeply personal and affirming. Talks and stories about God being a friend, companion, counselor or guide mean a lot to them. Since this is the age when significant people in kids' lives are terribly important to the formation of self, a personal God-one who loves and affirms-is potentially the most significant influence.²³

Along with acceptance there is importance in relationships, as adolescents find much of their identity in their relationships with peers, with parents, with other adults, and God:

Robert Kegan in his classic study, *The Evolving Self*, (1982) presents a developmental approach which highlights the central importance of meaning-making and interpersonal balance, as the crucial concerns of adolescents. ...[T]he adolescent self is almost devoured by the need for the affirmation and presence of the other...[A]dolescents are more concerned to keep their identity by keeping their relationships, which define the self, than they are to define themselves via identity with various institutions.²⁴

Developing healthy relationships in these areas form a centerpiece for this author's confirmation program. It is in these relationships that meaning may be explored:

The adolescent's search for identity is ultimately a search for meaning. Our prayer is that our young people will find that meaning in the call of Jesus to a life of discipleship. In our work with youth, we need to be clear about who we are as the church of Jesus Christ with all its flaws, even as we make room for youth to question what we say.²⁵

23. David Shaheen, *Growing a Jr. High Ministry* (Loveland, CO: Group Books, 1986), 62.

24. Robert L Browning and Roy A. Reed. *Models of Confirmation and Baptismal Affirmation* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1995), 147.

25. Diane J. Hymans, "Adolescent Development," in Conrad, *Confirmation*, 230.

What does a mature Christian faith look like? The Effective Christian Education Project, a national project in the 1990's, developed a definition that covers eight core dimensions.

A person with faith maturity:

1. trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus.
2. experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace.
3. integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships and political choices as part of one's religious life.
4. seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer and discussion with others.
5. seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish each other.
6. holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others.
7. advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice;
8. serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice.

These eight dimensions can be collapsed into two overall themes. A person of mature faith has both a life-transforming relationship to a loving God – the vertical theme – and a consistent devotion to serving others – the horizontal theme.²⁶

What does an adolescent need? As complex as the persons themselves, they need to know that they are loved by family, community, other adults, and God, and that in this love there is room for questions and growth. In their questions and growth the adolescent not only explores where God is calling them, but what God is calling them to do and be at this moment. Here is where they find meaning and purpose, which will help frame who they are and who they will become.

26. Peter Benson, "Building A Faith for the 90's", *The Lutheran*, (January 3, 1990), 9, as quoted from the research presented in *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, March 1990).

Faith Development of the Adolescent

As the adolescent develops, with changes in their brain, their bodies, and their culture, so too does the adolescent faith. In Fowler synthetic/conventional faith stage:

God is perceived as an extension of interpersonal relationships and can be counted on as a close personal friend. In Stage Three people have no problem believing that God has a *perfect parking space for them right in front of the store* because he deeply loves them and is interested in their best interests. God loves not only the individual but also the whole group with whom this person has identified. Those with synthetic/conventional faith are quite sure regarding who are the true people of God and who are not.²⁷

James Fowler presents another way of exploring the years of the adolescent. As the egocentrism of the adolescent was explored above, so that egocentrism is evident in their understanding of God and of God's people.

As the adolescent matures he/she develops the faith (through God's grace) into that which guides them in an understanding who God is, and what they are called to do and be. In the *Effective Christian Education* study, researchers discovered that teenagers (and adolescents) could be categorized into four faith types:

Integrated faith – a Christian with an integrated faith experiences both a life-transforming relationship to a loving god and a consistent devotion to serving others.

Vertical faith – A Christian with a vertical faith has a life-transforming relationship to a loving god, but doesn't have a consistent devotion to serving others.

Horizontal faith – A Christian with a horizontal faith is consistently devoted to serving others, but doesn't have a life-transforming relationship to a loving God.

Undeveloped faith – A Christian with an undeveloped faith doesn't strongly express his or her faith either by a devotion to serving others or a life-transforming relationship to a loving God.²⁸

27. Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 116.

28. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain and Dorothy L. Williams *Exploring Faith Maturity: A Self-study Guide for Teenagers*, (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990), 5.

The research then elaborated eight marks of faith, through which the young disciple could grow in their faith. These include: “Trusting and believing, seeking spiritual growth, integrating faith and life, holding life-affirming values, experiencing the fruits of faith, nurturing faith in community, advocating social change, and acting and serving.”²⁹

These categories and “marks of faith” guide the adults and educators of adolescents to help them on their journey. One of the most concise expressions of what is needed to help the adolescent grow in faith is expressed in this model:

Youth tend to learn best with a three-step model is employed—dialogue, model, guide. First we dialogue (lecture and/or discuss) the biblical truth we are teaching, its explanation, and its practical usage. Second we supply models for how that truth looks in the lives of others. Third we guide them to act on or live out that truth in their own lives along with practical opportunities to live it in the present.³⁰

Who is God? Who am I? What role have I to play? How do I make sense of the changes around and in me? How do I relate and connect with community? and What is God calling me to do and be? are questions that are asked throughout life, but especially in the adolescent years. The church, parents, and educators are called to guide and support the adolescents as they grow in their humanity and in their faith, a process which might have significant life-changing moments, or might be a time of small yet essential growth-changes. Either way, God is working in their lives to bring about a faithful life of discipleship and love:

Working with junior highers allows us to relate to a group of kids who are just beginning to understand the meaning of being responsible for their own decisions.

29. Roehlkepartain, *Exploring*, 1.

30. Yount, *Teaching*, 328.

This is the time in their lives when they comprehend that if the Christian faith is to be one's own, a personal decision to develop it must be made. No one-parent, pastor, or peer-can decide for them. Adolescents' commitment to Christ may not occur like a flash of lightning or in a highly dramatic moment; it may evolve silently, without much awareness of it at all. Yet a decision about faith, either for or against, is crucial in this time of transition.³¹

One of the purposes of a confirmation program is to help the adolescent understand words of faith, so that as their identity in Christ and in Christ's community comes into clearer focus they may be able to express their faith:

Adolescents invest significant energies in striving to interpret themselves and their world in coherent, meaningful, workable, and personally satisfying ways. We do not have to promise this; it goes on quite naturally. They are involved in a search for a way of life, and the process is at once social and linguistic. If Erik Erikson is right that a central dynamic of adolescence is the development of a sense of identity, the significance of language – and hence, potentially, of religious language – in the lives of youth becomes apparent.³²

The Call to Parents

One theme of this Thesis is that parents are the primary teachers of their children. "This summary of research presents as its very first finding the simple statement, 'Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers.'"³³

Martin Luther's concern regarding education places the responsibility also on the calling of the parents. "Therefore let all heads of a household remember that it is their duty, by God's injunction and command, to teach their children or have them taught the

31. Shaheen, *Growing*, 60-61.

32. Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 120.

33. Merton P. Strommen, *Five Cries of Youth*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 86-87, as quoted from U.S. Department of Education, *What Works*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

things they ought to know.³⁴ And as he said in one of his sermons:

If you have children, train them to learn the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. If you urge them diligently to do this, they will learn much in a year's time. But when they have learned this, there are many excellent passages scattered throughout the Scriptures; these they should learn afterwards; if not all, at least some of them. God has appointed you a master and a wife in order that you should hold your family to this.³⁵

This call for parents to teach their young, laid out also in the Biblical section of this Thesis, is shown to be a central focus of their parental vocation, in which they not only teach, but guide, and provide a safe place in which the adolescent may grow:

In order to maintain a sense of their true selves and to grow into healthy women and men, Pipher and Pollack suggest that boys and girls need... support and encouragement of parents.... They still care about their parents, and want to know that they will always be welcome at home.

Secondly, [Pipher and Pollack] suggest the need to provide safe places for adolescents where they can feel free to show their true selves [with]... protection and challenge, affection and structure for girls, [and]... a safe space in which boys can explore their emotions and allow themselves to be vulnerable without shame or ridicule.³⁶

But, of course, parenting is not an easy job, and often (sometimes especially) the adolescent years are filled with strife and struggle:

He {the adolescent} wants to know not only where a parent stands by also why, and is ready to debate the virtues of the parental alternative over that chose by himself and his peers. Indeed, the adolescent's quarrels with parental decisions are part of his own indecisiveness.... Paradoxically, but understandably,

34. Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism" (1529), in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds, *The Book of Concord* (1580), (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 476.

35. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 51, *Sermons I*, J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 137.

36. Hymans, in Conrad, *Confirmation*, 216, as quoted by Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (New York: Grosset-Putnam, 1994), 284, and William Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood* (New York: Random House, 1998), 174.

the adolescent's indecisiveness also frequently throws him into a new dependence, particularly on his peers, but also on his parents. The adolescent demands that his parents take a stand if only so he can rebel against it.³⁷

The peer group also becomes important in the life of the adolescent, and many of these young people rebel against their parents and parental values as they seek out their own identity:

While parents continue to be a resource in their moral development, adolescents tend to conform to the expectations of their group of peers and of other significant adults in their lives. Their approval now rivals that of parents. Socialized into the norm of society, 'rules' continue to be given from the outside. Conflicts will arise for youth as they experience discrepancies between values of their peer groups and their parents.³⁸

There are many lists and qualities that define parents and families in which faith is passed on to children. This is one such list that will help inform the outcomes of this thesis:

Dollahite and Marks (2005) identified 10 central processes families used to facilitate R[eligious] S[piritual] D[evelopment] among family members, including:

- relying on God or God's word for support and guidance;
- sanctifying the family by living religious at home, including religious traditions;
- resolving conflict with prayer, repentance, and forgiveness;
- loving and serving others in the family, faith community and wider community;
- overcoming challenges and trials through shared faith;
- abstaining from proscribed activities and substances;
- sanctifying time, money, comfort, and convenience for religious/spiritual reasons;
- nurturing spiritual observance and growth in family members through teaching, example, and discussion; obeying God, prophets, parents, or commandments; and

37. Shaheen, *Growing*, 101.

38. Wilhoit, *Nurture*, 167.

- putting faith or family ahead of personal or secular interests.³⁹

Parents, even in the times when adolescents are looking to their peers, are primary teachers of the faith who model the faith in their own life, provide space in which the adolescent may grow, and trust in the work of the Holy Spirit:

We are responsible to teach others to the best of our abilities, striving to help them understand and obey God's Word. The Holy Spirit is responsible to use our efforts to touch the hearts of our students and lead them into obedient relationship with the Father. We are to teach as if it all depends on us, understanding that if students do respond it is because of the grace of God in their lives. We cannot change lives, but our responsibility is to teach so that God can use our efforts to bring our students to maturity. Maturity, rightly understood, means a changed life.⁴⁰

What the Faith Community Needs To Do

What is the role of the Church, the faith community, in educating their young? Of course, it is of primary importance. Not only are parents called to teach their children, but the call to teaching given to the first disciples and the whole church is one of the marks of God family.

The call to teach is given so that our young ones (as well as our no-longer-young) may grow in Christ, in community and in service:

Part of teaching teenagers like adults is to equip them for ministry, 'for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ' (Eph 4:12). We are to teach/equip them to be a functioning part of the church body, to

39. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Pamela Elostyne King, Linda Wagener, and Peter L. Benson, ed. *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 299, as quoted in D.C. Dollahite and L. D. Marks, "How highly religious families strive to fulfill sacred purposes," *Sourcebook of Family Theory and Research*, V. Bengtson, P. Dillworth-Anderson, D. Klein, A. Alcock, and K. Allen eds., (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 2005), 533-541.

40. Downs, *Teaching*, 34.

have the tools to walk with God for the rest of their lives, and to accomplish His purpose for them through works of service.⁴¹

There are several ways to pursue disciple-making in the congregation. Included here are listings of qualities and emphases congregation are to have to help promote faith-growth.

This first study is one in which researchers gathered data from several Christian denominations. Here the author acknowledges that there is not only a single model of youth ministry that is effective. Rather, the listed characteristics as used differently in different settings, all help the adolescent (and teen) in their faith growth:

A three-year study of youth programs, released in 2005 (Exemplary Youth Ministry Study, www.exemplaryym.com) (August 4-6, 2006) was conducted to ascertain critical characteristics that consistently produced youth who continued to walk with God as adults. Drawing data from over 700 Southern Baptist, Assemblies of God, Methodist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Evangelical Covenant, and Presbyterian youth ministries, researchers made two important discoveries. First, there was no single youth ministry *model*-that is, no specific way to do youth ministry-that proved to be most successful in long-term life change. Research did find, secondly, that there were nine common characteristics in youth ministries that helped teens continue to grow into adulthood:

1. Sense of the Presence and Activity of a Living God
2. Emphasis on Spiritual Growth, Discipleship, and Vocation
3. Promotion of Outreach and Mission
4. Congregational Priority and Support for Youth Ministry
5. Fostering of Significant Relationships and a Sense of Community.
6. Developing Committed competent leadership
7. Focus on Households or Families.
8. Common (as in typical) Effective Youth Ministry Practices.⁴²

In this second study the researchers explored the key traits that helped a congregation in developing faith maturity in their members (adolescents as well as other

41. Yount, *Teaching*, 327.

42. Yount, *Teaching*, 341-343.

members). Here also are background pillars of strength that hold up a congregation's teaching ministry:

In examining congregational life, researchers identified five key traits that promote faith maturity. The more each factor is present in a congregation, the study found, the greater the faith maturity among members. [The factors are:]

1. A Warm Climate... is [in] a church that feels friendly and welcoming.
2. A Thinking Climate... [in which churches] clearly expect people to devote time to thought and study.
3. Uplifting Worship... [T]hough worship alone isn't a strong promoter of faith maturity, it does have an important impact.
4. Receiving Care... [in which] members... feel that others in the congregation care about them, particularly in times of crises or difficulty.
5. Service to others... [T]he study found that a variety of outreach activities can help people grow in their faith.⁴³

This third listing comes from Gary Parrett and Steve Kang, who offer seven Commitments for the Congregation to be a teaching and forming community. These are arranged to fit an acrostic (a-b-c...), and can form the basis of a congregation's ministry to and with disciples of all ages:

1. Access to the glorious Gospel, unfold[ing] the Story, [keeping] the Gospel as of first importance;
2. Baptism, including preparation, confirmation, and recollection in the Gospel and the three Summaries [The Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Decalogue]
3. Commitment to the Covenant Community, [centered in] the Gospel, highlighting the distinctiveness of the denomination as well as the history, vision, and values of the church;
4. Deepening and developing in the Gospel, with training in Word, work, and witness;
5. Engagement in the Ministry of Reconciliation, [supported by] active ministry involvement and leadership training;
6. Follow Up- the care of the flock, and
7. Grace, [which is] cultivat[ed] as the *Ethos* of the Church.⁴⁴

43. Roehlkepartain, *Exploring*, 7-9.

44. Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 362-363.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Depew, NY, outlines its discipleship training of children and youth. As with the other listings, worship, study, service, care for others, and walking with God are key elements in helping the adolescent (and the disciple of any age) to grow in faith:

1. Three Avenues to Faith – Kerygma, Koinonia, and Diakonia;
2. Four Turnings – to Christ, to the Christian Message and ethic, to a Christian congregation, and to the world in love and mission;
3. Six Disciplines: Corporate Worship, prayer, Bible study, Giving, Service, and Witness and
4. Use of 19 of the 40 Developmental Assets from Search Institute.⁴⁵

The final piece of research comes from Search Institute. They have developed the “40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents,” which are located at the Appendix for Chapter 3. They are part of this Thesis because of the great volume of research and work done by the Search Institute, and the ways the Assets may be used in congregations to strengthen their youth in their discipleship.

The 40 Assets is a helpful tool to explore use of time and at-risk behavior, but does not address the issue of faith. This author has found it to be good for diagnosis, but not as proscriptive for faith formation. More will be explored in following chapters.

This review of key literature has explored the history of how adults perceived adolescents, what struggles in life- and faith-growth the adolescent experiences, and the role of parents and the faith community. The goal is both to help the adolescent develop and express their faith now, and to continue to grow into maturity in Christ. In the care of the faith community, through the love and guidance of parents, and with the gift of the Holy Spirit the adolescent has the tools he/she needs to be the disciple of Jesus Christ.

45. Dean M. Hunneshage, “Discipleship Training of Children and Youth,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 41, no 3, (Fall 2002), 191.

CHAPTER 4

Thesis Project to Strengthen Faith Formation in Adolescents and Their Parents

This Chapter is designed to lay out the procedures and activities that comprise the Project, the results of which will be explored in Chapter Five. Some of the key themes and ideas that were examined in the first chapter included the concerns that led to this thesis: that Martin Luther in his day saw a lack of education in the life of his people, which led him and other reformers to re-develop a confirmation ministry, a ministry that today is in need of reform; that today's adolescents struggle with their identity, with their growth from childhood to adulthood, and with their faith-growth; that the church needs to help in the adolescent's faith growth; that many of today's parents of adolescents also struggle both with their own faith-growth and with their articulation of that faith (and other issues) with their children and so the church needs to support the ministry of parents; and that the meaning of the educational and ritual event of "Affirmation of Baptism" in the Lutheran Church needs to be explored.

Chapter Two led the reader through a theological word study of the Bible on education, teaching, faith, and the ritual acts of Baptism. God really is the Prime Teacher, and thus the teaching of the Church and of parents is part of the ministry we share from God. Also in Chapter Two was the exploration of the post-Biblical history of the creation of Confirmation and its separation from Baptism, as well as Medieval, Reformation, and contemporary expressions of how those two events were understood.

The next Chapter explored the history of how adults viewed children, resulting in a developmental stage (or stages) for adolescents. Identity, community, faith- and value-

systems, morality, and service to others are key issues in this (and other) stages. Also important are the roles of the parent and faith community for and with the adolescents.

The key document for ELCA Lutherans regarding Confirmation was approved in 1993: "Confirmation ministry is a pastoral and educational ministry of the church that helps the baptized through Word and Sacrament to identify more deeply with the Christian community and participate more fully in its mission."¹

It is the concern of this author that the process of confirmation ministry not lead just to knowledge, or rite of passage, but to a life of discipleship and mission:

Besides avoiding the impression of being a mature confession of faith to ratify infant baptism or of being a church membership rite, a new rite for confirmation must take seriously the idea that confirmation [as instruction] equips a person assuming 'greater responsibility in the life of [the] Christian community and mission in the world.' An early proposal for doing precisely this was made by Hans C. Boehringer, the primary drafter of the rite of Holy Baptism in *Lutheran Book of Worship*. He suggested that the rite used for confirmation should become an ordination, focusing on prayer for the person who is accepting his or her mission as a Christian in the world, and should be shorn of its baptismal trappings in order to avoid the appearance of an initiation rite.²

This is also central in the understanding of John Westerhoff, who takes the concept of conversion (of the believer) as a turning that the Christian makes as they grow in their faith. "Conversion, I believe, is best understood as this radical turning from 'faith given' (through nurture) to 'faith owned.' Conversion is radical because it implies

1. The Confirmation Ministry Task Force Report, Adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, September 1, 1993, in Robert Conrad et al., *Confirmation, Engaging Lutheran Foundations and Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 266.

2. Jeffrey A. Truscott, "The Future of Confirmation: A Proposal," *Word & World* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2002), 199, as quoted from Hans C. Boehringer, "Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion: Christian Initiation in the Contemporary Church," *Valparaiso Institute of Liturgical Studies Occasional Papers* No. 1 (1981) 86-87.

ownership and the corresponding transformation of our lives. It implies a reorientation in our thinking, feeling, and willing; a moving from indifference or one form of piety to another.”³

Again, another resource speaks of confirmation as a commissioning to mission:

The church does not teach faith solely to ensure that young persons are properly indoctrinated and can talk accurately about faith. Faith is more than the possession of right information; faith is a personal relationship with God revealed in Jesus Christ. Faith is God’s gift to believers. Confirmation-commission helps persons recognize this gift, prompts them to review its effect on their lives, and encourages them to choose to live in a relationship with God that will endure and grow.⁴

In addition to the previous research, discernment, and prayer, the author will use a survey tool and focus groups to further assess the needs and possibilities of the faith community and parents teaching the faith to our adolescents in the confirmation ministry program.

The survey tool will be the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Profile.⁵ Based on the Developmental Assets (the 40 Assets are included in the Appendix to Chapter 3, and divided into the 8 asset categories) this tool is a series of 58 questions, to which the respondents answer on a four-point scale (Not at all/Rarely, Somewhat/Sometimes, Very/Often, Extremely or Almost Always). In addition to the

3. John H. Westerhoff, III, *Will our Children have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 39.

4. Betty Crowell and David Ng, ” Journeys of Faith: Confirming and Commissioning Young Members of the Church,” *Journeys of Faith: A Guide for Confirmation-Commissioning*, Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing House, (1990), 3

5. Search Institute, “Developmental Assets Profile” and “Developmental Assets Profile Group Assessment User Manual,” Revised 2005, <http://www.search-institute.org/surveys> (accessed November 4, 2011).

Asset View the Profile may be interpreted to see the *Context View*, in which the personal, social, family, school, and community emphases are present in the respondents' answers. "The DAP provides a way to document, quantify, and portray adolescent's reports of the types and levels of Developmental Assets working in their lives."⁶ Since the Profile is copyrighted, the reader would need to seek permission from the Search Institute to view or to use this profile.

50 profiles were given to thirty five Junior High students on Wednesday, November 16, 2011 and to fifteen High School students on Sunday, November 20, 2011. The Profile was administered at a one-time class setting for each of the two groups, and then tabulated by the author. The goal of this author in using this tool is to quantify the attitudes, needs, and at-risk behaviors present in this context, and then using the results, as well as the material from the Search Institute, to redevelop this specific confirmation program.

Another resource was the conversation with Dr. Mary Hughes, a Seminary Professor who teaches education to Pastors. This Professor teaches at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, at which this author received his M.Div. She has been an educational guide for a number of students over several years. In this one-time interview, held at Trinity on December 2, 2010, the discussion centered on three primary concerns. The first concern was, "What key elements need to be in a confirmation ministry program?" This explored the use of Luther's Small Catechism, mission events, connections with real life, and how do we (how does an adolescent) practice faith. The

6. Search Institute, Developmental Assets Group Assessment User Manual, 1.

second concern was, “What about the rite of Affirmation of Baptism?” This rite, previously called “Confirmation” normally comes at the conclusion of the 8th grade year. Discussion focused on whether this process should be offered in earlier (elementary) years, or later (High School) years. In addition the meaning of this rite was explored (see Chapter 2). The third concern was “What resources are available?” This conversation examined current practices and curricula for such confirmation ministry, as well as support resources both in the greater church community and in the interpretative community (such as Search Institute and Barna).

Another tool for gathering research was the focus group format. Two of these focus groups were with a similar population as the Asset Profile. Discussion was held at a one-time one hour evening session with eight Junior High students on Wednesday, December 7, 2011 and then at a one-time Sunday Morning session with ten Senior High students the following Sunday, December 11, 2011, all who had previously taken the Profile. The students were notified as to the process of this thesis, and the goals of this session. The format of the session was an open dialogue with questions coming both from the author and from the students, and responses encouraging other questions and issues. The primary questions included:

1. What is important to you in your faith today?
2. Where do you find joy?
3. How do you deal with stress/problems?
4. Where do you see God in your life?
5. Who is God for you?
6. What is God calling you to do/be (is God calling you?)?

7. What spiritual disciplines have you done (are you doing) in your home?
8. Do you talk with your friends about God or about your congregation?

Specific questions for Junior High included:

1. What do you expect will be different in your faith-life after you are confirmed?
2. How could confirmation help you in growing your faith?

Specific questions for Senior High included:

3. How did confirmation help you in your faith a few years ago?
4. What could be done differently for those Jr. High youth?
5. What support could we give you now in your faith-journey?

What was expected to come out of the Junior High focus group was both the Desire for confirmation to be “fun,” and a desire on some of these students to find meaning in their faith and connection to their faith-community. Many, but not all, of these students are in the confirmation program because of their parents’ expectation, and express a desire for exciting community. But also expected was an articulation of the student’s faith, as well as a growing understanding of God’s role in their life.

On the other hand, the Senior High students are present in this setting because they have chosen to be. Some may not yet be driving so may feel compelled to be present, but for the most part their presence is their choice. It was expected to find a deepening understanding of God’s presence and grace in their lives, and a committed searching out of their discipleship, as well as at-risk behaviors evident in the Search Profile. These students also offered a perspective on their confirmation years, exploring how their faith did or didn’t grow, and how the confirmation ministry program helped or

didn't help that growth. In addition this group explored what tools are yet needed to help their faith growth.

Another focus group was comprised of neighboring Lutheran pastors who teach confirmation. These pastors were chosen by the author and invited to a one-time luncheon session, Monday, January 9, 2012. The nine pastors invited represented both large and small congregations, traditional and non-traditional models of confirmation ministry, new-to-ministry and no-longer-new to ministry. The pastors came to this session aware of the author's concerns as well as the process of this thesis. Before the session a listing of the primary questions was given to each of the participants, and then presented at the session, so that they would know the overarching plan for the time together. Conversation flowed freely, sometimes out of the primary questions, sometimes into new areas of ministry and concern.

These pastors all bring similar concerns as the author, trying to share the faith with adolescents caught up in this present culture, as well as equipping parents of adolescents in their faith-teaching. Anticipated expectations included much frustration with the current status of sharing faith with Junior High students as well as the awesome potential and calling these students have. It was expected that there be several models of education that these pastors are using in their confirmation ministry program. It is also expected that these pastors bring a high commitment to some form of specialized education in the confirmation years.

The initial questions shared with these pastors included:

1. What's working in your confirmation ministry?
2. What's not working in your confirmation ministry?

3. How are you growing in your faith?
4. What models of confirmation do you know of that have potential?
5. What support are you giving to parents of Confirmands?
6. What value is there in earlier (elementary) or later (high school) confirmation?

The final focus group was with parents of Junior High disciples. Twelve parents, representing 10 families, and about 20 adults who no longer had children in their home were gathered on Sunday, January 8, 2012 at the invitation of this author. These adults were chosen based on their perceived involvement with their students as well with the church community. As with the pastor's focus group, before the session they were given a listing of the primary questions that would be discussed, a listing that was then available at the session.

This session, similar to the others, was designed for conversation, using the initial questions to begin this discussion, but with freedom to branch off into issues that are important to the adults as well as to the outcome of this thesis.

One concern of this author is that this focus group would be for the adults one more reminder of all the things they should be doing as parents in which they are failing. An expectation this author holds is that these parents are both longing for a stronger connection with their child, and a stronger connection with God. Therefore a primary intention is to affirm the parents in their ministry, and mutually discover how the church may better equip them for this ministry.

It was anticipated that the adults would have memories of their Junior High days which are both positive and negative, and therefore view their children's experiences through these lenses. It was also expected that they would positively receive tools that

they could include in their family's busy life, tools to build not only faith, but conversation about other important issues. As they are intimately involved in their children's lives, daily watching their growth, they would have a handle on how best to reach their child.

The primary questions included:

1. What does the Junior High disciple need today?
2. What was your faith-life like when you were in Junior High?
3. What do you need to assist your child/children in their faith?
4. Where do you see God in your life?
5. How is the Church helping or not helping our Junior High disciples' faith-growth?

This author's goal is both to help parents of adolescents in their ministry, and to help the adolescent grow in faithful discipleship, into maturity in Christ. With the use of the Search Institute tool, previous research and prayer as well as these focus groups, this author seeks to strengthen faith and discipling in both the adolescent and in their parents.

In his article, "The Future of Confirmation," Jeffrey Truscott uses an example from Marva Dawn in which she decries contemporary worship that does not ask for involvement from the worshipper. He writes:

Dawn then notes that this practice "is detrimental to character formation because faith must be *practiced*, because to worship God requires [the] investment of ourselves." Thus, the formation of Christians who are committed to the church's mission is now an even greater challenge for the church, since the religious culture of America currently gives less support to a person's full participation in the church's life and mission. Thus, a rite for confirmation cannot treat the issue of participation in the church's mission as an abstraction. Rather, this rite should be related to a concrete reality in a person's life, namely, a specific lay ministry to

which he or she has been called by God and the church for the sake of the church's mission.⁷

Confirmation is that calling to lay ministry, the growth in faith, the discerning of ministry, the participation in the work of God, the response to the blessings received in Baptism and given by the God of grace in Jesus Christ.

7. Truscott, 201, as quoted from Marva Dawn, *A Royal "Waste of Time": The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 232.

CHAPTER 5

Research Results on Faith Formation

The results in this chapter follow the plan laid out in Chapter 4. There are several pages of data from the *Profile*, followed by a narrative exploring each of the focus-group conversations, and then conclusions.

40 Developmental Assets Profile

The *40 Developmental Assets* compiled by Search Institute, which are included as an Appendix to Chapter Three, are “developmental vitamins – positive experiences and qualities identified by Search Institute as being essential to healthy psychological and social development in childhood and adolescence.”¹ The 40 Assets are grouped together into the assets of support, empowerment, boundaries & expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competency, and positive identity.

The *Profile* is an assessment tool that was given to 32 Junior High students (November 16, 2011) and 8 High School students (November 20, 2011) in the author’s context. The fifty-five questions in the *Profile* are designed to gain an understanding as to the presence of these Assets in the life of each student. This tool may be used to examine at-risk behavior in students, as well as exploring faith in terms of time commitment. As such, it is a good diagnosis tool, but does not necessarily measure faith-formation.

1. Search Institute, “Developmental Assets Profile Group Assessment User Manual,” Revised 2005, <http://www.search-institute.org/surveys> (accessed November 4, 2011).

Of these 40 Assets, twenty are External. “External assets are positive experiences, relationships, and encouragement and support young people receive from peers, parents, teachers, neighbors, and other adults in the community.”² The four External categories are:

Support—support from parents, family and other adults; parent-adolescent communication; advice and help from parents, helpful neighbors; and caring school environment.

Empowerment – feeling safe at home, at school and in the neighborhood; feeling valued; and having useful jobs and roles.

Boundaries and Expectations – having good role models; clear rules at home and school; encouragement from parents and teachers; and monitoring by family and neighbors.

Constructive Use of Time - participation in religious or spiritual activity; involvement in a sport, club, or group creative activities; and quality time at home.³

The other Assets are Internal. “Internal assets are characteristics and behaviors that reflect positive personal and psychological development in young people.”⁴ These Internal Assets include:

Commitment to Learning – enjoys reading and learning; caring about school; doing homework; and being encourage to try new things.

Positive Values— standing up for one’s beliefs; taking responsibility; avoiding alcohol, tobacco and drugs; valuing honesty, healthy behaviors; being encouraged to help others; and helping, respecting, and serving others.

Social Competencies – building friendships; properly expressing feelings; planning ahead; resisting negative peer pressure; being sensitive to and accepting others; and resolving conflicts peacefully.

Positive Identity – optimism; locus of control; and self-esteem.⁵

2. Search Institute, Profile Manual, 2.

3. Search Institute, Profile Manual, 5.

4. Search Institute, Profile Manual, 2.

5. Search Institute, Profile Manual, 5.

The *Profile* was scored and then interpreted. A total of the average scores in either the External or Internal category that ranged from 26-30 is considered excellent, with abundant assets. A range from 21-25 is good, the student experiencing moderate assets, with room for improvement. A fair score is in the 15-20 range, in which there is considerable room for strengthening assets in many areas. And 0-14 Assets is low, containing few if any assets. A total score is then recorded, which is a total of the External and Internal Assets. The label of the range of score is therefore also doubled: excellent is 51-60, good is 41-50, fair is 30-40, and low is 0-29.

The administered surveys were tallied. Following are several tables which record the External Scores of the Junior High and the Senior High, as well as a Bar graph of these scores together, then similar tables for the Internal Scores, followed by a final graph visualizing the total scores.

Table 5.1. Junior High External Scores

ID	Support	Empower	Boundary	Time	External Average
1	11	15	12	13	13
2	27	23	28	15	23
3	20	18	18	18	19
4	24	23	22	20	22
5	24	25	24	23	24
6	30	28	30	28	29
7	30	27	30	23	28
8	29	23	29	30	28
9	29	27	29	23	27
10	27	23	26	20	24
11	30	22	28	20	25
12	30	30	30	30	30
13	29	25	30	25	27
14	27	27	29	25	27
15	23	22	19	20	21
16	26	20	30	28	26

ID	Support	Empower	Boundary	Time	External Average
17	24	23	26	28	25
18	24	20	20	10	19
19	9	25	23	25	21
20	7	20	16	20	16
21	10	17	17	20	16
22	26	27	28	30	27
23	30	28	27	30	29
24	30	27	30	20	27
25	27	28	30	23	27
26	29	30	29	30	30
27	24	20	21	28	23
28	30	30	30	28	30
29	27	27	27	28	27
30	24	27	24	25	25
31	24	25	29	25	26
32	19	23	23	23	22
Jr.Hi	24	24	25	24	24

Table 5.2 Senior High External Scores

ID	Support	Empower	Boundary	Time	External Average
H1	27	28	26	28	27
H2	30	28	26	18	26
H3	27	28	29	28	28
H4	23	28	24	30	26
H5	26	27	24	23	25
H6	26	25	23	25	26
H7	21	25	18	20	21
H8	24	28	19	30	25
H.S.	26	27	24	25	26
Total	25	25	25	24	25

In this Profile, there were twenty-one Junior and Senior High students who ranked in the Excellent category, fourteen in the Good category, four in the fair, and one that registered in the low category.

The External Assets data, comparing Junior High, Senior High, and Total scores is compared on this bar graph:

Figure 5.1. External Assets

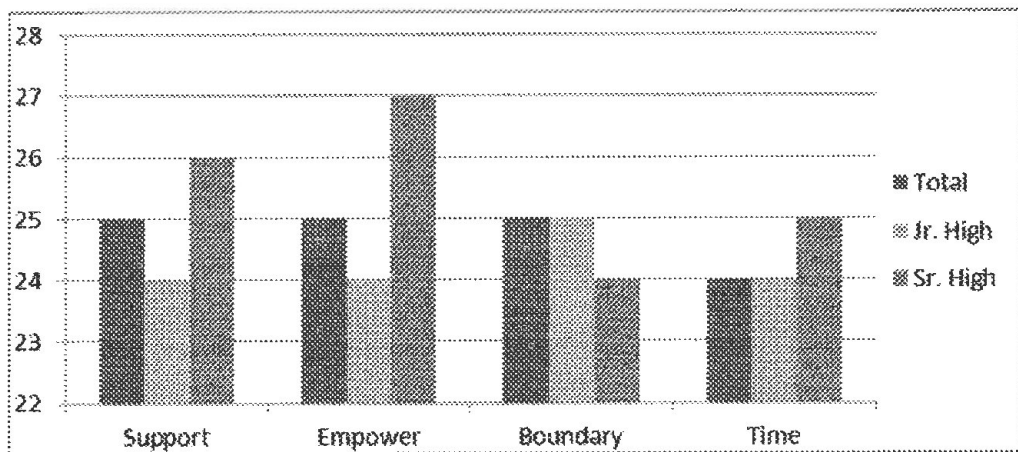


Table 5.3. Junior High Internal Scores

ID	Learning	Values	Social	Identity	Internal Average
1	19	14	16	18	15
2	14	19	20	12	20
3	16	17	14	13	20
4	16	19	20	20	21
5	23	17	19	22	22
6	30	27	29	25	28
7	26	24	25	18	25
8	24	28	23	28	27
9	30	25	25	30	27
10	16	18	21	22	22
11	20	24	25	25	24
12	26	29	30	30	29
13	29	20	18	20	25

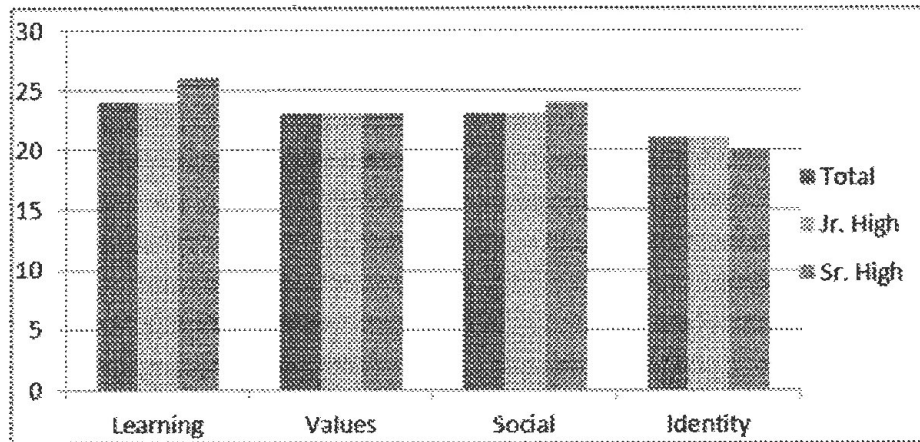
ID	Learning	Values	Social	Identity	Internal Average
14	30	24	25	23	26
15	21	21	23	15	21
16	27	18	18	20	23
17	23	25	25	20	24
18	10	19	24	13	18
19	27	25	19	12	21
20	23	24	21	27	20
21	19	15	14	17	16
22	26	27	24	23	26
23	29	25	26	25	28
24	27	23	29	25	26
25	27	26	30	28	27
26	24	28	28	28	28
27	23	20	16	15	21
28	30	24	26	27	28
29	27	25	29	22	27
30	26	24	28	20	25
31	20	21	23	17	23
32	26	27	28	20	24
Jr. Hi	24	23	23	21	24

Table 5.4. Senior High Internal Scores

ID	Learning	Values	Social	Identity	Internal Average
H1	27	22	20	17	24
H2	17	21	19	25	23
H3	26	27	26	27	27
H4	29	27	30	22	27
H5	23	22	21	20	23
H6	26	22	24	15	23
H7	27	18	25	15	21
H8	29	25	24	15	24
Sr. Hi	26	23	24	20	24
Total	24	23	23	21	24

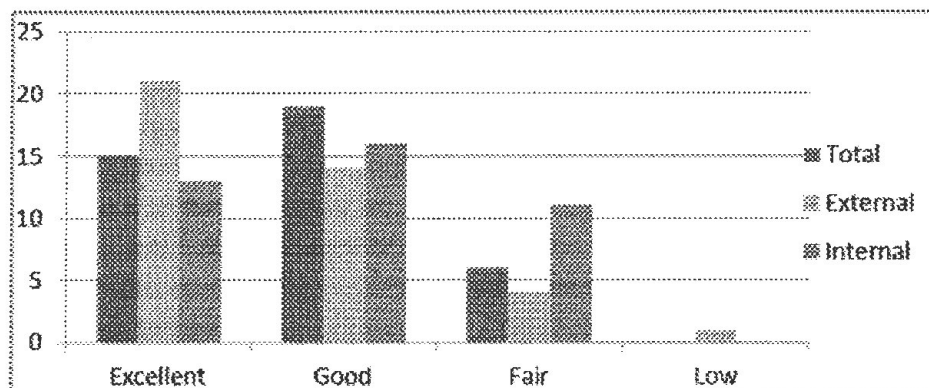
In this data there are thirteen Junior & Senior High students in the Excellent range of the Internal Assets, sixteen in the Good range, and eleven in the fair. As seen in a bar graph, the Internal Assets are displayed:

Figure 5.2. Internal Assets



After the External and Internal Assets have been interpreted, then the Total Asset score may be computed by adding the two scores (External & Internal) together. Based on the raw data above there are fifteen Junior and Senior High students in the Excellent range, nineteen in the Good, and six that ranked in the fair range. This next bar graph plots the Total, External, and Internal Assets for all students in their ranges

Figure 5.3. Total Assets.



This Asset View is one way to portray the strength of assets in the respondents in this survey. Search Institute has an additional way to interpret this data. By applying the results to a different set of categories one may understand this data through the *Context View*. Divided into five categories the Context view encompasses:

Personal. Scores in the Excellent range on this scale (25-30), indicate a young person with a high degree of honest, responsibility and integrity, as well as high self-esteem and a sense of purpose.

Social. The Social Scale reflects assets related to relationships with others, both adults and peers.... [It shows] also characteristics such as support, role models, and helping others.

Family. The Family scale obviously reflects assets related to home and family.... High scores on this scale suggest a young person with a safe, warm, and supportive family, with good parent-child communication.

School. The School context scale combines assets related to the school environment, relationships with teachers, and the young person's attitude toward school.

Community. The Community Context scale combines external assets related to neighborhood and community support, empowerment, and positive use of time in the larger community.⁶

Similar to the format for the External and Internal Assets, the data in the Context View for the Junior High respondents and the Senior High respondents is recorded, followed by a Bar Graph visualizing the Context Views.

As the reader explores the data, it will be evident that of the students who responded to this *Profile* fourteen were ranked in the Excellent ranking in this Context View, nineteen were in the Good ranking, six in the Fair, and one in the Low ranking.

6. Profile Manual, 28.

Table 5.5. Junior High Assets in the Context View

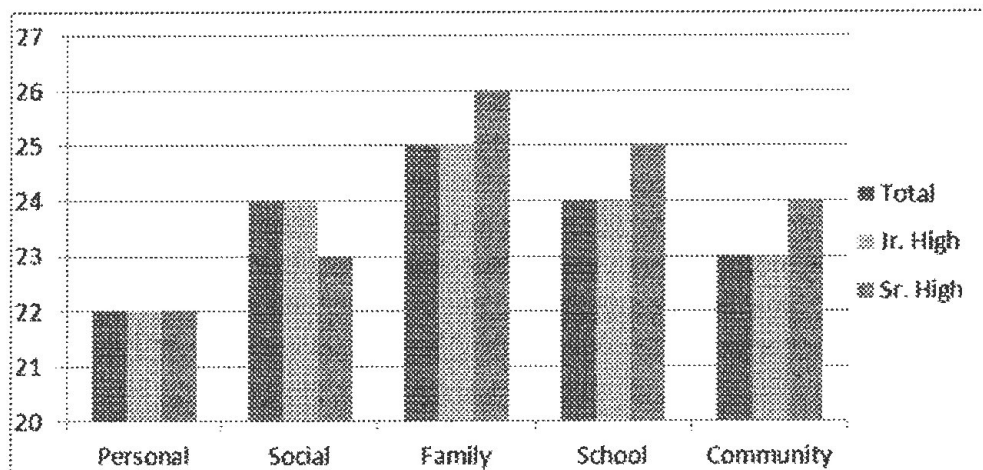
	Personal	Social	Family	School	Community	Average
1	18	15	10	16	13	14
2	13	20	27	22	18	20
3	15	18	23	14	15	17
4	18	23	23	23	18	21
5	18	22	25	23	21	22
6	26	29	30	30	28	29
7	20	25	29	29	24	25
8	28	25	29	26	26	27
9	28	27	30	28	23	27
10	18	23	26	20	21	22
11	24	25	25	26	24	25
12	30	29	30	29	30	30
13	22	23	27	28	24	25
14	25	25	26	30	26	26
15	18	22	21	19	22	20
16	20	24	24	27	20	23
17	24	24	25	22	11	21
18	17	21	21	14	15	18
19	20	22	15	21	28	21
20	25	21	12	15	21	19
21	13	15	17	16	18	16
22	23	26	30	23	30	26
23	27	25	30	29	28	27
24	26	26	29	28	22	26
25	28	28	29	29	27	28
26	26	30	29	29	30	29
27	11	22	22	22	28	21
28	25	29	30	30	15	26
29	24	28	26	27	28	27
30	24	27	24	25	23	25
31	20	20	27	26	23	23
32	24	23	18	23	28	23
Jr. Av	22	24	25	24	23	24

Table 5.8. Senior High Assets in the Context View

	Personal	Social	Family	School	Community	Average
H1	22	23	28	25	24	24
H2	25	22	28	20	22	23
H3	25	25	29	29	24	26
H4	25	24	28	25	27	26
H5	21	23	26	25	23	24
H6	20	20	19	24	20	21
H7	19	25	28	26	27	25
H8	18	22	25	25	23	23
H.S. Av	22	23	26	25	24	24
Tot. Av.	22	24	25	24	23	24

The Context View of the Assets, comparing the total, the Junior High, and the High School is thus viewed in a bar graph:

Figure 5.4. Context View of Assets



All this data points to the need for care, curriculum, support, and material that strengthens the positive Assets, helping also to support that which promotes faith growth.

Meeting with Seminary Professor of Education

A meeting was held between the author and Dr. Mary Hughes, a professor of Christian education at Trinity Lutheran Seminary on December 2, 2010. Dr. Hughes teaches educational philosophy as well as curricula to those studying to be pastors. The conversation centered on three primary topics.

The first was the question, “What are the keys to teaching confirmation?” Certainly faith-formation is at the center of this process. But for Dr. Hughes such education cannot just be ancient history. The content of the teaching must connect with real life, in which the students may see their faith relating to what happens in their daily life. This connection can begin either with daily issues or with the theology of the content, but needs to be connected (i.e.: not just that God created the world, but what does that mean now and to the student.) It is also important that the teachers/pastors practice their own faith, since the adolescent will experience the authenticity of faith in the life of their teacher.

Another way to answer this question is to have as a goal that all the students become theologians, able to look at their world through the eyes of theology, being able to project what they believe onto what is happening in their world. A caution from Dr. Hughes at this point is to remember that developmental psychology, with all its different stages and qualities, is descriptive and ambiguous, not proscriptive, so that this author, or any pastor/teacher, not be boxed into what an adolescent (or any person) should do or be based on their stage in life – God continues to bring surprises and unexpected developments into our lives, and into the lives of the adolescent.

The second question in this meeting was, “What is important in the rite of Affirmation of Baptism?” It seems the prevailing wisdom that the rite of Affirmation (formerly called Confirmation) remain at the end of the 8th grade year, but that continuing mission trips, servant events, and faith-connection events continue on throughout High School.

It is important also to begin the “theologizing” earlier than the Junior High years, both with the youth as well as with their parents. The later elementary years are best for beginning the parent-child conversation around faith. It is possible that the actual rite of Affirmation of Baptism may be separated from the confirmation ministry, with education beginning well before the Junior High years, and continuing on through High School.

The third question was, “What are the resources available?” This author would like to create the environment in this context in which growth in faith is “part of the water,” part of the DNA of the growing disciple. One resource is from Valparaiso University, called “Faith Practices,”⁷ which offers resources and support on how to develop faith practices with all ages. These faith practices include honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, keeping Sabbath, forgiveness, healing, singing our lives, and several others. Such practices may develop in youth, adults, and families the ways that they can grow together in their faith.

Another resource is the Barna Group.⁸ This organization is replete with research

7. Dorothy C. Bass, et al., *The Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith*, “Practicing Our Faith”, <http://www.practicingourfaith.org> (accessed January 11, 2012).

8. David Kinnaman, President, The Barna Group, <http://www.barna.org/> (accessed January 23, 2012).

and resources on leadership, spiritual training, and church facilitation. One of the important links in this organization, and to the author of this thesis, is their research and support material geared to family/kids, and teens/nextGen young people. Resources on today's change face of faith, such as in the article, "How Teen Faith Practices Are Changing," quoted in Chapter One, and current trends are masterfully explored and helping material is provided.

Another resource is a book on nurturing disciples, written by David Anderson and Paul Hill.⁹ The premise in this book is that the home is as important as the church in faith formation. This faith is formed through personal, trusted relationships with Christian parents and other adults. The authors put forward four keys of spiritual discipline, which include caring conversations (the sharing of stories of faith), devotions and prayer, service, and rituals and traditions. Each of these four keys are designed to be practices on a congregational/community level and on a home/family level, so that disciples, both youth and adult, grow together in God's grace.

Another resource is called Vibrant Faith Ministries.¹⁰ As is listed on their website, those who have vibrant faith are authentic in their faith in Christ, are available to others, and are affirming of others and of the gift of life. These Ministries offer seminar and training courses, coaching and consulting, web-based and print resources, all geared to strengthening vibrant faith. Whereas many of the resources are best used with adults, there are plenty that are appropriate for families and adolescent faith growth.

9. David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, *Frogs Without Legs Can't Hear: Nurturing Disciples in Home and Congregation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2003).

10. Paul Hill, Director, Vibrant Faith Ministries, <http://www.vibrantfaith.org> (accessed January 11, 2012).

Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, offers a Master of Arts Degree from the Center for Children, Youth, and Family Ministry.¹¹ In addition to offering this degree, the Center provides workshops and events throughout the year, such as the First Third Conference.¹² This Conference is designed to equip leaders who work with those in the first third of their life, children, youth, and young adults. The event held in February 27-29, 2012, was entitled, “Monkey Business: A First Third Dialogue on the Confirmation Process.” Monkey business is what Martin Luther called the rite of Confirmation, as it was so tied into the role and power of Bishops in his day. Some of the learnings this author gleaned at this Dialogue will be presented later on in this chapter.

Faith Incubators¹³ is a resource that offers web and print based resources, primarily for confirmation, but also for all facets of education. The Confirmation curriculum uses a model in which there is a large group presentation of the material, followed by small groups, led primarily by lay members of the congregation, so that the confirmands “catch” the faith from other adults.

Also part of this program, and included on the website, are the Faith Stepping Stones, for which there is a ritual and community blessing for those who are newborn, entering preschool, school, early and late elementary, adolescence, confirmation, and High School graduation.

11. Terri Elton, Director, Luther Seminary Center for Children, Youth, and Family Ministry, <https://www.luthersem.edu/cyf> (accessed February 2, 2012).

12. Terri Elton, Director, Luther Seminary Center for First Third Ministry, <http://www.firstthird.org> (accessed December 18, 2011).

13. Rich Melheim, Founder, Faith Incubators, <http://www.faithink.com> (accessed March 1, 2012).

Search Institute's "Effective Education Study," presented in 1990, continues to provide background to what has happened in several protestant denominations in the USA. Search Institute¹⁴ is a goldmine of resources for children, youth, parents, and adults with tools such as the "40 Developmental Assets," and parenting materials.

Focus-Group with Junior High Students

This author gathered a group of eight Junior High youth following an evening Catechism session. This hour session, held on December 7, 2011, was candid with discussion regarding issues and improvements to their faith growth.

They expressed that family and friends were most important to them in their faith. For these youth the upbringing that had and the kinds of friends with which they surrounded themselves gave them guidance and support in their faith. They also talked about church as being an important place to learn more about God and about God's plan/guidance for their lives. The overarching concept of love was key for them, as they saw love as the way they are accepted by God, and the way they are called to relate to others.

They found joy in the family, friends, and coming to church, but as one would expect, also in pets and hot chocolate. It was noticed by this author that several of these youth already approach life with a joyful attitude, and have strong support from family, friends, and church. When it came to the question of stress, they commented on their frequency of prayer and reading the Bible. Their understanding of prayer flowed from

14. Search Institute, <http://www.search-institute.org> (accessed September 28, 2011).

their belief that God was there to hear their prayers. They pray when they are nervous, when they are facing a difficult test, at night when they are ready to fall asleep, and sometimes at meals. These students carried in themselves a belief that Jesus is always with them (thanks be to God!).

They were asked, “What is God like?” The images were easy for them to picture: God is like a stuffed animal, present and comforting; God is like a dog, loyal, loving and caring. God is like all-powerful Campe (a figure out of Greek Mythology, used in different video games). They also expressed biblically oriented images, such as Holy Spirit as a dove, God as storm, or speaking out of a bush, or full of mercy.

They asserted that they were learning in confirmation, but were willing to learn more: read the Bible more; make the Ten Commandments more relevant; learn the basics of the faith. They also expressed a concern regarding certain youth who always seem to misbehave, thus drawing attention to themselves. One result to assist in this situation is to change the format of our evening. Previously the youth would arrive to an open gym time, with pizza and un-scripted conversation centers. Then we would have a group game, full of energy, followed by the large group presentation, then the small group sessions, and then home. The new suggestion was to move the energizing game to the end of the evening, Thus the large group presentation and small discussion would be before most of them had been “hyped-up” by the game. After the small group we would all gather together for the game, and then a final prayer and blessing of each other, then home.

When asked about spiritual practices that they are doing in their home, the common word was “busy.” They are busy, their parents and busy, siblings are busy. A

couple of the families read the Bible, but not with much frequency. A few have some regularity of prayer at night, or at meal time. But in reality, such faith growth, even in these homes, now seemed to be housed in the church.

These youth were somewhat reluctant to speak of their faith outside of the church, or their closest friends. They spoke of being intimidated by other Christians who are super-verbal about their faith and their church community.

For these youth the confirmation ministry program was one more step in their faith growth, one step of several yet to come.

Focus-Group with Senior High Students

The nine Senior High students that gathered on December 11, 2011, all carried some level of understanding that God is always with them. These students choose to be part of the High School group, yet remember that they didn't have that choice in Junior High (the parents made the choice for them).

Recalling their confirmation years, they saw importance in support from the church, so that the confirmands figure out who they are and who they are going to be. These High School students had a greater understanding of themselves and of God's calling in their life, and wanted to impart that understanding to those who are younger. On the other hand, this author believes that some of this increased faith-understanding has come with physical and mental growth. The High School student grasps concepts and can see the future in a more holistic way than the middle adolescent.

Several of these students practice prayer each day, some of them using little booklets, such as "Portals of Prayer." But they are searching for something deeper. They

also talked about reading the Bible if they were having a problem. Several of them have a style of Bible in which editors have included indices that help a person find a specific scriptural passage based on a specific issue, i.e.: when lonely, read Psalm 23.

They remember the format of the confirmation class session, liking both the large group presentation and the small group discussion, in which the key elements of faith were broken down into small units, such as a session on "Hallowed be thy Name." They suggested that adults who do not have Junior High children would be the leaders of the small groups, instead of using several pastors in that role.

More relevance was part of their suggestion, bringing in current movies to connect with the theological themes, or using more interactive drama in which the youth would participate to set the concept during the openings. The High School youth also recommended greater involvement in mission trips, some local (one day) or others farther away (and up to a week).

When asked about support for parents, several of them said that they would be glad to go speak to parents of Junior High students, to share their own faith journey, and to help teach the parents the key elements of faith that are important to them. They all recommended that some sort of teaching and training for parents of adolescents is important.

These High School students were aware of their role in their faith growth, as well as the need for the community of parent, friend, and church to support that growth. They all spoke that they see life and faith differently now that they are older. May God continue to work in them as they grow in grace!

Focus-Group with Pastors

Seven area Lutheran pastors gathered for lunch and a conversation regarding confirmation ministry on January 9, 2012. Each is responsible for youth ministry and confirmation in their parish. One pastor began the discussion with the disclaimer, "Confirmation in the Lutheran Church is a practice in search of a theology." As may be seen in this thesis, the theology for the practice has been varied throughout history and denominations.

One pastor serves a congregation in which there are twenty students in a three year program during the 6th, 7th, & 8th grades. The second has thirty-six students, also in a similar three year program. The third, also in a three year program has 35 students. The fourth pastor has a two year program with 24 students, the fifth has 16 in a two year program, and the sixth who uses a two year program with about 50 students.

Four of the churches offer the confirmation classes weekly during Sunday Morning. One congregation of these four uses the first three Sunday mornings as teaching sessions, and then the fourth Sunday as the small group. When there is a fifth Sunday the confirmands are responsible for planning worship for the congregation. Another church has classes twice a month on Sunday afternoon following a community lunch after the final worship service, and yet another meets with the confirmands weekly on Wednesday evening.

All gathered use a general format in which the confirmands meet in a large group, during which the material for the session is presented, The confirmands then are divided into small groups, some led by parents, others led by the pastors, in which conversation goes deeper into the topic. Group-building is also a key element in the small groups.

In this gathering the key texts for formation of the adolescents are Luther's Small Catechism (in which Luther explains the key elements of faith: the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion) and the Holy Bible.

Several use the "Re-Form" Curriculum from "Spark,"¹⁵ with new DVD opening presentations (somewhat along Monty Python humor and style). "Spark" centers not only on the Bible and Small Catechism, but also discipleship, church history, modern living. A few others use "Faith-Incubators", (see pg. 104) which for Lutherans was a pioneer in the Large Group – Small Group format. "Here We Stand"¹⁶ is another Lutheran curriculum similar to Faith-Incubators used by one of the congregations.

One congregation developed its own Discipleship Program for 7th & 8th Grades, with the purpose To Form Disciples of Jesus Christ by: Teaching the Bible and Martin Luther's Small Catechism; Encouraging faith sharing with family, friends, and neighbors; building Christ centered relationships; Empowering joyful service; and Guiding youth into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

Retreats are part of several programs. These one-night or weekend overnights often center on a certain aspect of the program, such as "Baptism," or on a ministry task in which the youth are involved. These retreats are usually held once a year, but one congregation offers them in both fall and spring. For one congregation the teaching of

15. Vicky Goplin et al., "re:form," Spark House, <http://www.wearesparkhouse.org>, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers) (accessed January 14, 2012).

16. Vicky Goplin et al., "Here We Stand," <http://www.herewestandconfirmation.org>, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers) (accessed August 14, 2007)

spiritual practices was important, such that the students learn and practice how to pray, how to read the Bible, etc. Another congregation begins and ends its program year with a one-on-one student interview with the pastor, emphasizing the growth and learning that will occur (was to have occurred) in that year.

Twice a year one congregations takes their class out to visit other non-Lutheran churches, usually those to which the students' friends attend. In addition, during the year, two sessions are held in which members of the congregation come to the class and share their faith-stories.

For each of these pastors the exercise of students writing out their faith-statement is an important piece of the curriculum. For some these statements are well orchestrated and guided experiences. For others the process is initially begun by the pastors and then completed with the parents' involvement.

Sermon notes are part of each of these congregations' program. Here the student takes a prepared sheet of paper and answers questions during worship. Such questions include: Describe something important to you in the sermon or Bible reading. What is a main point of the sermon? List a highlight of your family time this past week. How does the sermon relate to your life? List prayer concerns.

The use of the internet is a growing tool for these pastors. Pastoral connection with the students on a regular basis through e-mail or Facebook is fairly common. But no one uses curricular resources that are available for teachers and students on the Net.

Memory work also has varied usages. Two of these congregations do not ask the students to work on any memory work. One has an assigned Bible Verse or section from the Small Catechism (This author memorized the whole Small Catechism, as was typical

until recent years) that is memorized during the week and then the student is tested on this memory work in their small group. Another has the memory work as a part of the student-parent homework, and then both student and parent sign a document stating that the work has been completed.

All present in this group were concerned about the parents, and the parental ministry in their child's faith education. One congregation offers a "daily sheet" for parents and youth to read and discuss together following the class session. On this sheet the guidance is for parents and youth to be involved in a *family huddle*, for 5-10 minutes, in which they share highs and lows of the day; read a daily Bible verse; talk about how that verse relates to their life; pray for each other's highs and lows, and bless each other by making a cross on the forehead. Another uses memory work that the youth and parents work on together, and then a document is signed signifying that the work is completed, thus bringing the parent into the teaching role. Two of the congregations have the parents present during the Sunday class. They are fully part of the conversation and growth. The question was asked, "What do you do with parents who are not involved?" One response was that it is not appropriate to punish a student because of their parents' apathy. And yet, the key in their programs was to form faith in the lives in the youth.

What is the prevailing theology concerning the rite of Confirmation? For these pastors the clear understanding, as is presently typical in the Lutheran church, is that this is a time for the young disciple to affirm their faith, and affirm their baptism. Confirmation is an intentional time to grow in discipleship. God has already chosen them; parents and sponsors were responsible to bring them up in the Christian faith; they

have grown through the confirmation process. Now it is their responsibility to grow in faith, letting the Holy Spirit work through them, listening to God, following as a disciple of Jesus. These students do become adults in the church, able to serve in ministries, and gifted with offering envelopes. But this is part (a significant, intensive part) of the life-long process of the Holy Spirit working in their lives.

Where is there grace in the confirmation ministry program? One pastor quipped that confirmation is the only place Lutherans really believe in salvation by works! Actually each of these pastors appear to hold a grace-filled tension between the reality of the business of a Junior High Student's life, and the need for serious, intentional faith-formation. For most that means that students who are unable to attend a session have other means to gain the information, and then share it with their parents.

The final question asked of these pastors was, "How are you growing in your faith?" One uses Eugene Peterson's "The Message//Remix:Solo"¹⁷ as their tool. This has portions of *The Message* with guidelines for lectio divina for each day of the year. Another finds growth in spiritual accountability within their staff, all who are using *E-100: The Essential Jesus*¹⁸ as a tool. A third is memorizing the biblical "James," and leading his people to be spiritual leaders in the congregation. Several of the others have been looking for something to renew their faith.

17. Eugene Peterson, *The Message//Remix:Solo, an Uncommon Devotional* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007).

18. Whitney T. Kuniholm, *The Essential Jesus: 100 Readings through the Bible's Greatest Story* (Valley Forge, PA: Scripture Union USA), 2007.

Focus-Group with Parents

This last group was held on January 8, 2012, with about 45 adults, many of whom are parents of Junior High students, a few of elementary students, some who now have adult children, and a couple who never have had children. This one hour session was held with good dialogue among all the participants.

There were several responses to the question, “What should we/parents pass on to our children?” Many responses saw wisdom in parents passing on a commitment to faith growth and to church participation. They want children to see that church is an extension of home, and that the church family is part of their family. Another response was that the adults want to pass on the attitude of the goodness in life, and that God’s presence gives direction and purpose to one’s life. “God is a constant,” one adult said, even in the midst of chaos and problems.

Through the whole conversation a common theme was that adults were to lead by example. Children and youth often perceive authentic faith regardless of what words are being said by the adults (or in spite of those words). So and adult’s life it to reflect the grace of God, even as they try to teach this grace.

A corrective that was heard in this group is that not only do adults pass on the faith, but adults often may learn faith from children, who may be more open to God’s grace and presence.

“What gives you joy and strength?” These parents were quick to respond with the community and support from their church family. In the church context these adults experience joy each week, are surrounded by caring people, engage in small groups for deeper conversation and consolation, and find their faith renewed. Many also expressed

the strength that comes from daily devotions and prayer. These resources for joy and strength are part of the “tools” to be passed on to the next generations.

These adults were then asked, “What would you say to parents of Junior High students?” Responses included quips such as, “hang in there!” “Hold on!” In addition they agreed that these parents need to make a choice for church, to balance the family’s time between church and secular (sports, school, music, etc) activities. One of the parents of Junior High students defended their family’s thrice-a-year soccer tournament weekend, placing it in balance with their regular church-participation when at home.

Parents of Junior High students would like to have teaching for themselves and other parents in their situation, so that they also learn the keys of faith: Luther’s Small Catechism and Bible. One mentioned that it would be helpful to have elements of the faith to be memorized by each grade level, so that parents would know, for example, that there are ten Bible verses to be memorized in First Grade. For these parents the concern is that the parents need to be educated even as their children are undergoing education.

One set of parents spoke of a game they spend time on with their children. An arrow on a board is spun, pointing to a number on a wheel. Each number relates to a pile of note cards, on which are questions. Some of these questions are simple, ie: “What is your favorite color?” Others are more complex, dealing with faith issues or social/political issues. This game has been a great discussion starter for this family.

Throughout the whole conversation all adults agreed that it was most important that children, whether under their care or not, experience unconditional love from the adult, patterning God’s unconditional love for us.

Conclusions

In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther offers the reader explanations of the key elements of faith, namely the Ten Commandments, The Apostle's Creed, The Lord's Prayer, the two Sacraments, and then some added guidance for morning & evening prayers, standards for bishops and pastors, responsibilities for parents and those getting married. As he presents each item, such as the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, who art in heaven," he then asks the question, "*Was ist das?*" or in English, "What Is this?" He offers his explanation, which has formed the basis for the question and answer format of confirmation study since his day. But for many generations, including this author's, the question of Luther was translated into English, "What does this mean?"

What does this mean? What does this thesis mean? Of what value is the ink on this paper, the delving into biblical words and concepts of teaching and ritual, the exploring of history and of adolescent development, the questions and surveys given to young people and adults, the time spent in instruction with young people? What does this mean?

The following pages are a response to this question. Of course, this is just touching the "tip of the iceberg," and many of the conclusions have been well known for a long time. But it is this author's step in better understanding how best to serve the young disciples in this context. The following conclusions are grouped: theologically, pertaining to adolescents, pertaining to parents of adolescents, curriculum, and the Confirmation Ministry program.

Theological Conclusions

There is strength for the teaching ministry in the biblical understanding that God is the prime teacher (Chapter 2). From the beginning of time God has been teaching God's people of God's awesome love and purpose for creation. Not only is this the understanding in the Hebrew Scriptures, but Jesus also assumes that role. One of His primary titles was teacher, or rabbi, pointing to his teaching ministry, as well as to the role of learning lived out by the disciples.

As disciples grow to be more like God, they take on the teaching role. God is the prime teacher, and God has commissioned God's disciples to teach. This call to teach is given to the community of faith, as well as to those who are parents, bringing children up in the faith. The content of this teaching consists not only of the information of how to love God and love the neighbor, but also leads us into a relationship with this God in Christ Jesus, in which we experience grace.

It all begins with God, and is wrapped up in grace. Gary Parrett and Steve Kang express this specifically in the conversation about confirmation, "The emphasis on confirmation is not on individuals confirming their own faith but on the fact that God is confirming his promises to them. Thus confirmation, like baptism, is preeminently a celebration of God's grace."¹⁹

Before the rite of confirmation, there is baptism. This is, and has been, the preeminent point of grace, the joining of the new disciple to the death and resurrection of

19. Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 386.

our Lord Jesus. Baptism is, for Lutherans, that sacrament out of which Christian life and discipleship flows. Confirmation is not a re-do of baptism, but a new stage in ministry.

The Statement of the ELCA from the 1993 Task Force on Confirmation takes the promises of God in baptism and identifies three major themes that then flow from the baptismal graces:

- (1) *Identity/Community*. Baptism reveals our identity as God's children, forgiven and renewed, members of Christ's body. Because it comes from God's action, this identity takes precedence over other aspects of who we are: ethnic background, gender, nationality, class, or culture.
- (2) *Mission/Discipleship*. Confirmation ministry can inspire young Christians to become an active participant in this mission by becoming faithful disciples, or followers of Christ.
- (3) *Vocation/Ministry*. Confirmation can help young Christians determine how they want to live now and in the future.²⁰

This Statement now continues to be the underlying understanding of the role of baptism and confirmation in this church: "Confirmation ministry is a pastoral and educational ministry of the church that helps the baptized through Word and Sacrament to identify more deeply with the Christian community and participate more fully in its mission."²¹ It is as the disciple grows in faith he or she gains identity in Christ and in the community of the body of Christ, and then in the adolescent years, through the confirmation ministry instruction he or she find the calling for discipleship and ministry.

This awesome grace coming from an awesome God calls all of God's people to

20. Thomas K. Johnson, *Confirmation: A Congregational Planner* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 31.

21. "The Confirmation Ministry Task Force Report" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Congregational Ministries, 1993), in Conrad, *Confirmation: Engaging Lutheran Foundations and Practices* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 266.

change their lives, living as faithful disciples. Quoted before in this thesis, John Westerhoff speaks of this transformation as conversion, in which grace and faith develop from knowledge to a lived, felt faith. "Conversion, I believe, is best understood as this radical turning from 'faith given' (through nurture) to 'faith owned.' Conversion is radical because it implies ownership and the corresponding transformation of our lives. It implies a reorientation in our thinking, feeling, and willing."²²

The theological understanding of the educational process in confirmation often meets reality, where we find that some view this time as just a rite of passage, something to get through. Quoted here is a helpful corrective, calling the church and parents to view these years with new commitment in God's grace:

Ironically, these rites of passage, which are intended to mark a new level of maturity and of taking one's place in the faith community, have actually become the exit door for many young persons. Some parents have even affirmed this sort of arrangement: "Just get confirmed, and then you can leave the church if you want."

But this need not be the case. A rite of passage at this stage of early adolescence can be filled with meaning, marking a new commitment and new commencement, if the family and the congregation commit themselves to the thoughtful work that can help to make it so.²³

The theological understanding that underlies confirmation ministry is that teachers (in the church and in the family) teach because they have been taught by God; the education received is wrapped in grace and knowledge and is centered on a relationship with God in Jesus Christ; this teaching flows out of baptism, in which the

22. John H. Westerhoff, III, *Will our Children have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 38-39.

23. Parrett, *Teaching the Faith*, 386.

disciple receives identity, mission, and vocation; growth in this calling is a conversion that is both a daily renewal of baptism and a life-long learning; and confirmation is the time in this author's context in which the adolescent disciple deeply explores this grace, relationship, and calling, and the development of a faith that is felt and lived in Christ..

Junior High Adolescent Conclusions

Results from the Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets Profile," noted above, offered insights into a typical group in this context. Whereas these Assets do not specifically give a picture into faith development, they do offer a helpful diagnosis on some of the correlatives elements to faith.

These Assets were viewed both as External and Internal, as well as how the students responded based on their Context. Regarding the External pairing of Assets which include Support (from family, school, etc), Empowerment (including feeling safe), Boundary & Expectations (good role models), and Constructive Use of Time (including participation in sports, clubs, church, etc), of the students surveyed twenty one ranked in the Excellent category, fourteen in the Good, four in the fair, and one in the low.

This is the beginning of the data that caused this author some concern. (Of course, all of the students in this context should be rated Excellent!) But this Profile gives a picture into reality. In looking closer at the details, the average of each of the categories reveals that all of the Junior High responses were only rated Good (25 & 24), and for the High School students the Support and Empowerment categories were rated Excellent, but the Boundary and Time categories were rated Good.

Of particular significance to the author, who scored the Profile, was the times several youth rated themselves low in areas of being safe at home, or not finding support from other adults. This needs to be addressed, and the youth to be supported, in this congregation.

The Internal Assets, which include Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies (friendships, etc), and Positive Identity, were scored, and of the students who responded on this Profile there are thirteen in the Excellent rating, sixteen in the Good, and eleven in the Fair. Breaking the statistics down, the averages in the Junior High respondents shows that the rating for the specific categories is only in the Good rating, with Identity right on the edge between Good and Fair. High School respondents show an Excellent in the Learning category, but Good in Values and Social, and then dip into the Fair rating in the Identity category.

The other way to look at this data is through the Context View, which realigns the responses into different categories that explore the respondents' contexts: Personal Social, Family, School, and Community. For both Junior and Senior High students the Family category was the highest, but still only in the Good rating for Jr. High. The lowest in both is the Personal category, with a 22, closer to Low. All five averages of the Context View categories were Good in the Junior High, and the Family rating was the only one that made Excellent in the High School responses.

For the personal growth and faith growth in the disciples in this context, there is work to be done. Search Institute offers curriculum to assist in the strengthening of these Assets that they have identified, curriculum that will enter the new confirmation ministry program in this context. Of course, this adolescent time is one full of change and

confusion. Identity is questioned, roles are changed (from childhood into adulthood), and this time is a process of upheaval. This is made evident in the Profile data. This data and the resources from Search Institute also point to where help is needed in this context. Tools for both adolescents and their parents will be included in the confirmation ministry program to strengthen assets and maturity of these young disciples, and of those who care for them.

As was explored in Chapter Three the needs of the adolescents to find identity, to achieve a value system and social consciousness, to develop their calling in Christ, to come to an understanding and appropriation of the Christian faith as seen through Lutheran lens, and to be able to integrate this into their developing life are all needs that a confirmation ministry seeks to address. In more than just a physical understanding, education in the church for adolescents should be a “space” in which questions are raised, a space for these disciples in which they are affirmed, shown and reminded of the awesome love of God, and a space in which the call to ministry may be discovered.

As reflected also in the Focus Groups it is important that these youth know that they are accepted, and that with this acceptance they receive tools to help their faith growth, such as faith practices, so that they may know better how to pray, how to read the Bible, how and where to engage in acts of love and care.

Elements of Chapter Two remind the reader that especially at this adolescent time education needs to be connected with not just abstracts, but with the real life these youth are experiencing, a connection that is relational and hands-on. Mission service and acts of charity are very important in the confirmation ministry program, as the adolescent often learns best of discipleship through doing ministry.

When should the years of intensive Confirmation/Catechism take place? There have been some who have advocated that the later Elementary student should experience this time of growth, others that confirmation should only be offered during the High School years. Based on the previous research in this thesis, this author has concluded that it is best in this context to keep the primary instruction during the Junior High years, but develop facets of the program that begin in the elementary years, and continue on through High School. One author reminds the reader:

While the development of a new adult catechumenate is an effort to be applauded in its own right, there are good reasons to renew and not abandon the structure prevailing in most congregations of confirmation instruction between ages 12-15. Young people have entered at this age a new cognitive stage of development that enables them to engage in more abstract reasoning about the faith.[In addition, I]f one understands that mood changes and resistance are normal (during changes in puberty), then the church can provide a valuable service in witnessing to God's accompaniment of young people during this challenging time of transition.²⁴

Another author and educator, drawing also on the precedent research on human development, encourages such training at the appropriate time when each adolescent reaches the mental stage needed for abstract thought:

About the age of 11 or 12 usually (although sometimes earlier or later) children reach the stage of formal operations or logical thought or abstract thinking.... Most of these aspects of thought are necessary for mature theological reasoning.... Probably most teenagers will be ready for the Small Catechism at about 13 or 14 years of age (roughly 8th or 9th grade). The later you begin instruction, the faster the students are likely to learn because they will have had more opportunity to practice the abstract thinking required to work well theologically.²⁵

24. Craig Nesson "Confirmation as youth ministry: The task of Christian Formation," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 22 (August, 1995): 268-74.

25. Margaret A. Krych, "The Content of Confirmation," in Conrad, *Confirmation*, 114.

Another question that was highlighted at Luther Seminary's First Third Conference (February 27-29, 2012. See pg 124) is, "What connection is there between confirmation instruction and the rite of Affirmation of Baptism?" Some thoughts include:

1. It doesn't make sense putting a cap on an adolescent's faith growth and asking them to make an affirmation they may not be able to make. Affirmation of Baptism may be not just a rite at the end of 8th grade, but actually several events when the disciple is growing in faith.
2. Affirmation of baptism with the laying-on-of-hands could (and is) also being done when a young child receives their first Bible, or when they receive their First Communion, or when they graduate from High School, or get married, or...
3. It may seem that though the Christian faith through Lutheran lens is that we are justified by grace through faith, some of our confirmation requirements, such as sermon notes, attendance, gowns at Confirmation, become a curriculum of works-righteousness; these requirements may also aid faith growth if presented in the right way.
4. It may be time to realized that we first belong to a community and then grow into belief, instead of believing first and then being good enough to enter that community.
5. The goal is to help maturing Christian adolescents – everything that detracts from that goal is not helpful. Faith formation is what this is all about.
6. How can we expect our youth to study the faith and make statements of faith

when we don't require that of the adults?

These thoughts are some of the issues and concerns over which this author continues to struggle, but is finding through this thesis-process a renewed understanding of keeping faith formation central in the confirmation process.

In addition, the confirmation program in this context will need to include ways to strengthen the 40 Assets in the adolescents, using material from the Search Institute. Work on these Assets will also assist in helping the adolescent in working through their questions and needs. The creation of a safe place in this ministry for adolescents will continue to be a high priority. Faith will be explored, faith practices learned, trusted and faith-filled adults will be actively present, and the adolescents will work on their faith through instruction as well as through involved acts of caring and mission. The Junior High years will be the key years for this instruction, but not the only years. Catechization will be introduced into the educational program of the elementary years, as well as into the High School years. Parents also will be called to be part of the learning process, so that they too may grow in faith and in witnessing to their young.

Parents of Adolescents

Based on the material that came from students in the Profile, as well as in each of the Focus Groups, parents of adolescents are key in the growth of their children. One assumption held by this author before the writing of this thesis that has grown in certainty is that parents first need to deal with their own faith growth. Parents who are living their faith and are articulate about their faith are able to train and support their children.

George Barna, in his book, *Revolutionary Parenting*, speaks of parents who are faithful and growing as revolutionary. “What fosters Revolutionary Parents’ ability to consistently honor God through parenting and provide their children with a stellar upbringing? According to our research, they intentionally pursue faith maturity. The Revolutionary Parents interviewed did not hesitate to explain the personal significance of seeking their own spiritual growth on a daily basis.”²⁶

David Anderson, in his book about the connection between church and home for faith formation, lists four principles of faith. The first is that faith is formed through person, trusted relationships. The second is that the church is a living partnership between home and congregation. The third is that home is church, too. He continues regarding the fifth principle:

...(I)f we want Christian kids we need Christian adults. We’ve noted in the fourth principle that faith is caught more than taught, but something must be there for children and youth to catch. What goes on in the spiritual lives of adults does matter. Youth ministry, properly understood, is spelled *adult renewal*.²⁷

One example of a congregation that intentionally trains parents for this ministry offers a tool that will be used in this author’s context:

We (the leaders in this congregation) begin by asking ourselves what faith skills every family should be equipped to practice in their homes....Before long, we have a healthy list of activities and disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, devotions, blessings, family service projects, and so on. After we compile the list, we determine at what age each faith skill should be taught in the home, so that it can be firmly established....

...(W)e then put together a faith at home training and equipping workshop for

26. George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 34.

27. David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, *Frogs Without Legs Can’t Hear: Nurturing Disciples for Home and Congregation*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003) 84.

each specific faith skill. We call our family training and equipping workshops, “Take It Home” events. Instead of scheduling them for an additional time that families would need to come to church, we built them into our Sunday School and youth ministry programs.²⁸

George Barna, working with all his research, is not only concerned with the training of parents, but with the ways family members grow in the gospel in their home:

While there are ample instances of family members engaging in spiritual activities apart from other family members- for example, Sunday school classes, small-group involvement, attending Christian events- the glue that holds it all together consists of two themes:

- family conversations that bring biblical views into their shared lives, and
- efforts to regularly engage in faith activities (Bible study, worship, prayer) that model the integration of faith into their lives.²⁹

The key is to provide tools for parents to become better parents. Through groups such as the Barna Organization and Search Institute, many resources are now available on the internet. One such resource is a monthly e-newsletter entitled, “Everyday Parenting Ideas.” Produced by “Parent Further,” and coming out of the Search Institute, this e-newsletter offers resources and helps for parents with children of all ages. For example, the edition that was sent out January 26, 2012 has as its center focus the question, “Is my kid normal?” Following a brief exploration of this theme, the reader is directed to links that continue this conversation targeted to parents with children up to 5 yrs of age, 6-9 years of age, 10-14, and 15-16. Other links include: “7 Healthy Habits for the New Year,” “Three Tricks to try in the event of a Tween sleepover,” and “Bank It: Talking To

28. Mark A. Holmen, *Building Faith at Home: Why Faith at Home Must Be Your Church's #1 Priority*, (Ventura, California: Gospel Light, 2007), 84.

29. Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 31.

Kids About Money.”³⁰ This free resource is now given to parents of adolescents in this author’s context.

The old statement, “It takes a village to raise a child,” is true in the church community. When a child is baptized, parents and sponsors promise that they will be responsible to raise this child in a Christian environment, teaching about the grace and calling of God. Then the congregation is asked, “People of God, do you promise to support *these sisters and brothers* and pray for *them* in their life in Christ?”³¹ It is the responsibility of the whole church to train, teach, and love this child. As John Westerhoff reminds the church:

If our children are to have faith, we need to make sure that the church becomes a significant community of faith. To meet this challenge we need to take seriously the characteristics of community and we need to examine, evaluate, plan, and develop educational programs around three aspects: corporate life; the rituals of the people; the experiences persons have within the community; and the actions members of the community perform, individually and corporately, in the world.³²

The confirmation ministry program in this context will include training for the parents. Some of the training will include information on developmental and faith growth stages, but more of the training will be assisting the parents to grow in their own faith. Classes of parents and adolescents together will be spaces for role playing and training in family conversation. As the primary teachers of their children, parents and their families will learn to develop faith formation in their homes.

30. Search Institute, <http://www.search-institute.org> (accessed January 26, 2012).

31. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2006), 236.

32. Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* 54.

Curriculum Conclusions

What should the shape of the teaching take in these confirmation years? One element that is reflected in several of the focus groups, and well known to this author, is the need to keep the teaching relevant, in touch with the life of these adolescents.

Confirmation is not just a history course in what happened to Jesus or what Luther said, but how faith in Jesus is alive today and in this context. One goal is to help these students become theologians, able to express and articulate their faith.

Of course, the teaching is centered in the Bible. “As youth are helped to read the Bible, they will find , as Luther held, it is the cradle that bears Christ, the means of hearing that they are forgiven sinners, justified by God’s grace through faith.”³³ This Good News of grace centered in Jesus is the key for all educational in the church. In addition to finding Jesus, these disciples should know the stories of the whole Bible, in which they can witness God working in the past, and together extrapolate how God works in their lives today.

The Catechism, along with the Bible is also key. For Lutherans, The Small Catechism and the other writings included in the *Book of Concord*³⁴ are a faithful and true witness to the Gospel, and are pervasive in this church’s teaching. The curriculum, as it has for many years, will continue to flow out of the Bible and the Small Catechism. “From beginning to end, confirmation in all its dimensions should aim toward the spiritual formation of young people as Christians. The study of scripture and the

33. Conrad, *Confirmation*, 119.

34. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

teachings of Luther's catechism remain the backbone of the curriculum.”³⁵

Luther's concern, back in the 1500's, was also that this teaching be only the beginning of faith growth, and that the disciple work on their faith throughout their life:

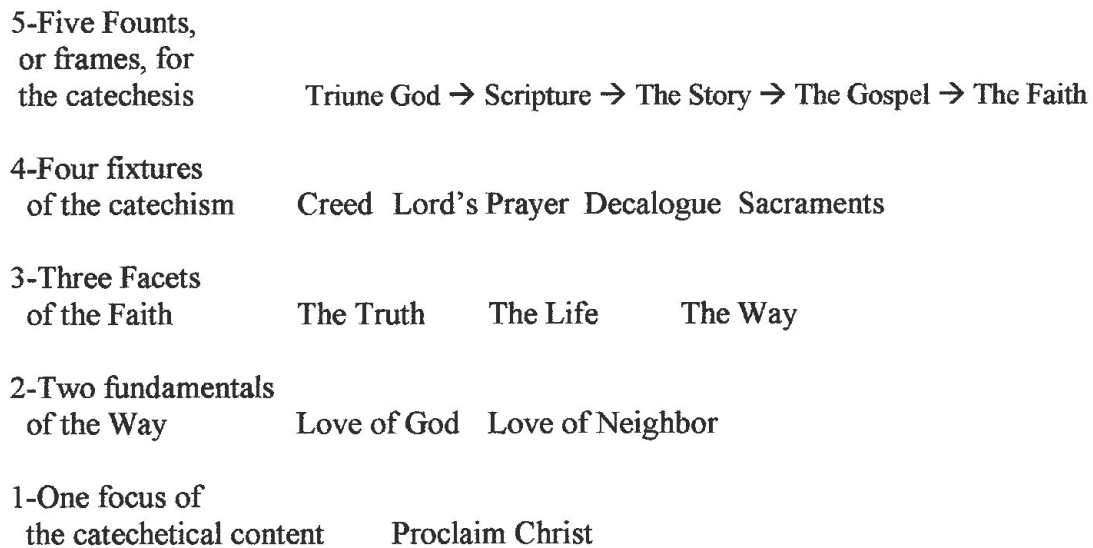
Luther wrote the Small Catechism for use in households so that the young and uneducated could be instructed....In the Shorter Preface to the Large Catechism, based on a sermon in May, 1528, he says that the catechism's "contents represent the minimum of knowledge required of a Christian." ...Luther did not intend that the Small Catechism be the end of Christian learning, but rather a beginning that would lead on to more serious theological learning.³⁶

In this table format J.I. Packer and Gary Parrett lay out their formula for what must be taught in the catechetical process. In this model are all the essential elements to a confirmation curriculum, especially as is taught in this context. The Five Founts of the Catechesis are the theological truths and actions of the Triune God who brings the disciple to faith through the Gospel as told in scripture story; the Four Fixtures of the Catechism are the same pieces of Luther used in his Small Catechism; the Three Facets of the Faith express not only who Jesus is, but the disciple's response to His call; the Two Fundamentals of the Way express the totality of the Gospel (love); and the One Focus of the Catechetical Content is to proclaim Jesus. "As a memory aid, we organize our thoughts with this simple numeric pattern in mind: 5-4-3-2-1. These figures represent the following elements:

35. Nesson, *Confirmation as Youth Ministry*, 274.

36. Conrad, *Confirmation*, 121, as quoted from Theodore Tappert, trans. and ed., *The Book of Concord*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press: 1959), 362.

Figure 5.5 Content of The Faith



Source: J. I Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 77.

This model provides a theoretical framework upon which the whole of catechetical and educational ministry may be hung.

The last piece of curriculum to be highlighted is service. As this thesis has shown teaching is both learning and doing, and the adolescent often best learns by doing. Research by Search Institute and others suggests that active involvement in service has a number of impacts on young people:

1. Service involvement bonds youth to the church, solidifying commitment and loyalty to the congregation.
2. Service involvement is a key factor in nurturing young people's growth in faith.
3. Service involvement promotes healthy life-styles and choices among teenagers.
4. Service Involvement rewards young people with new skills and perspectives.
5. People who become involved in service and justice when they are children or

teenagers are much more likely to be involved in these issues when they become adults.³⁷

Untouched in this thesis is the role of the Internet in the confirmation curriculum. Future study needs to be made on how best the students today can use the Internet, with appropriate guidance, to find information, to communicate with others, to develop spiritual practices, and to grow in faith in the confirmation ministry program.

That which is to be taught flows from Scripture and the Small Catechism, is centered on Jesus, explores God's gracious acts throughout history and today, is both intellectual and active, is expressed through faith-statements and acts of service, is washed in grace, is taught during the years both before and after adolescence, and is designed for the young person to more faithfully follow Jesus.

Confirmation Ministry Conclusions

A confirmation ministry program needs to be pervasive throughout the ministry of the congregation. "Faith formation is a gift of the Holy Spirit that continues throughout life.... A teaching and learning church invites the baptized of all ages—from infants to older adults—into a continuous discipline of learning and faith formation."³⁸ This means that "Confirmation Ministry" becomes the educational umbrella for all disciples, offering intentional education in the gospel and relationship with the Lord of Life beginning at the

37. Peter L. Benson and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Beyond Leaf Raking: Learning to Serve/Serving to Learn* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 16.

38. *Our Calling in Education: A Social Statement 2007*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Education.aspx> (accessed November 20, 2011) 13.

earliest age and continuing on through adulthood.

The development and practice of spiritual disciplines are an important part of a confirmation ministry program that stretches to all ages. It is one of the ways that the baptized child of God grows in the awareness of God's awesome direction and love. A resource from the ELCA called, "Call To Discipleship" uses the following seven faith practices, and offers support and guidance for the leader of a program, for the confirmation program itself, a youth Sunday school, a youth group, the home and family, and for the congregation:

The ELCA Call to Discipleship is an opportunity for congregations to encourage and challenge every child, youth and adult to learn the language of faith and to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ by living out seven faith practices: pray, study, worship, invite, encourage, serve and give... Whatever language you choose to use when discussing faith practices, remember that this is more about *being a person of God* than it is about *doing the work of God*, and that the journey is lifelong.³⁹

These practices, along with the others included in this thesis, are to be used in a confirmation ministry program, so that the adolescent, and accompanying adults, may grow in grace and discipleship.

Here the reader has come to the conclusion of this thesis. Through the data, history, and research, the author has come to some conclusions about the confirmation program in this context, a few of which were well known but now reaffirmed. Work still needs to be done on the selection or creation of curriculum for use by both adolescents and their parents. But more important than curricula are the ways adolescents, parents, and leaders grow in their faith.

39. Diane Monroe, *Calling Youth to Discipleship: A Guide for Youth and Confirmation Leaders* Copyright © 2000, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, <http://www.elca.org/ELCA/Search.aspx?q=Calling%20Youth%20To%20Discipleship>, 2.

When it is time for the Affirmation of Baptism, the adolescent is asked:

You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

And then each person responds:

I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.⁴⁰

It is this author's prayer that the response given is one step in many, as each day this disciple, along with their family and their congregation, grows in grace, rejoices in God's gifts, gives of themselves, and shares this good news, that Jesus be glorified.
Amen.

40. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 236.

APPENDIX

40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets®—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Support

1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries & Expectations

11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. School Boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. Positive peer influence—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

17. Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. Religious community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.

20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.

Commitment to Learning

21. Achievement Motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. School Engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school.
25. Reading for Pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. Equality and social justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. Honesty—Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competency

32. Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. Cultural Competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of Different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identity

37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”
38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”
40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.¹

1. Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Acting President and CEO, Search Institute, *40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)*, (Minneapolis: Search Institute), 1997, 2006, www.search-institute.org.

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